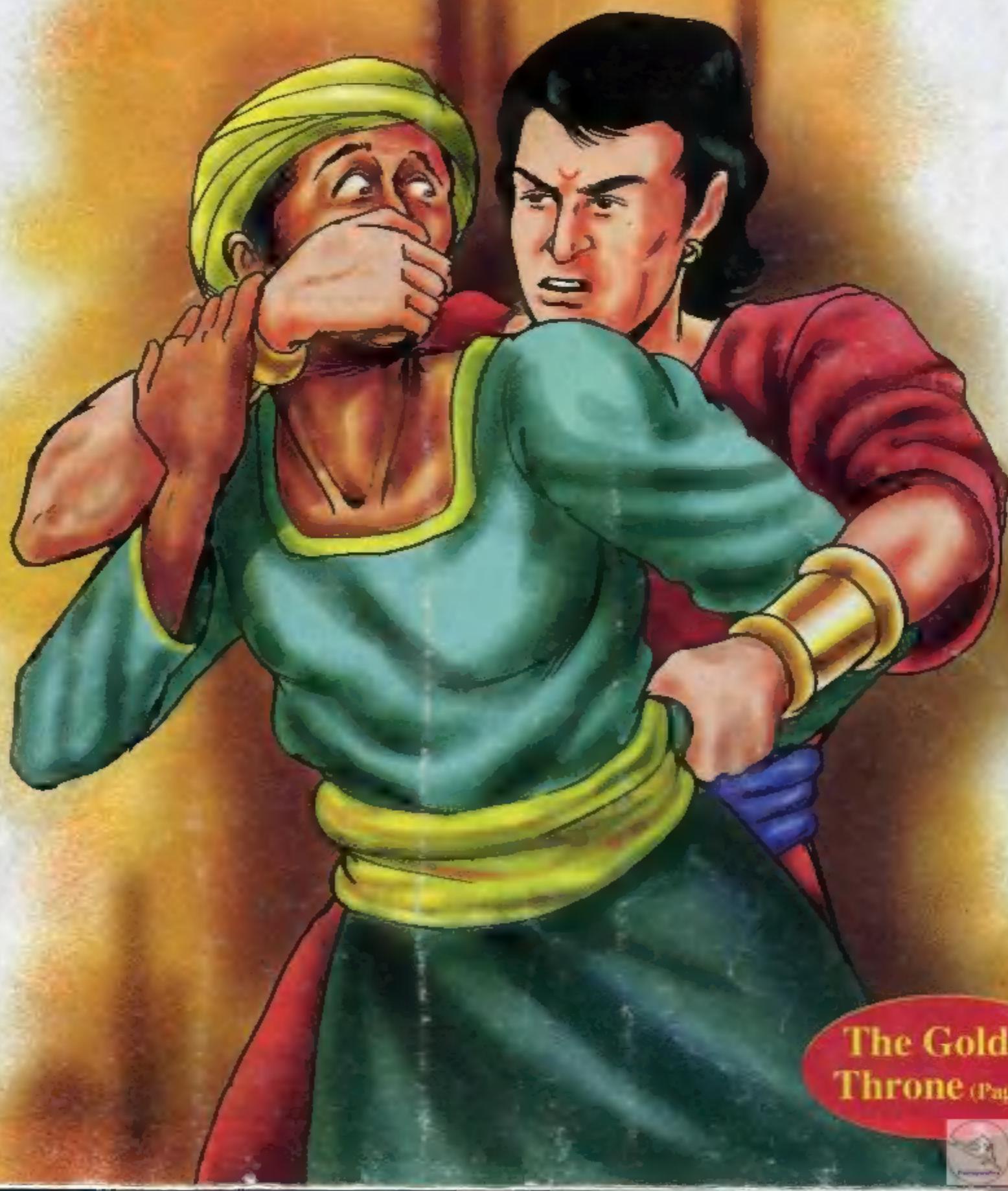


July 2000 - Rs. 10/-



CHANDAMAMA



The Golden
Throne (Page





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CHANDAMAMA

Vol. 30

July 2000

No. 7

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HIGHLIGHTS

The Golden Throne



Saga of India



Saga of Vishnu



CONTESTS GALORE

Creative, challenging and educative — calling for your participation.

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Founded by
B. Nagi Reddi and Chakrapani

IN QUEST OF INDIA

There was this report about an Indian who lived in the West since the days he was an infant. That is because his parents had settled down there. But he had visited India once or twice and had been fascinated by the country. He had read much about India's glorious heritage and adored her. He decided to return to India to serve this great country. He had himself earned well and his parents died leaving a huge fortune for him. He came to India in order to launch a welfare project.

"Do not forget that you belong to such and such state. That is the place which should be your field of work," he was told when he reached the capital of India. He proceeded to his home state. But once there, he was told about the region to which his ancestors belonged. When he was in that region, he was reminded of the religious faith to which he belonged — and then about the sect, too. His wealth should be used for those belonging to his sect!

He failed to find India and left the country with a heavy heart. He donated his wealth to the UNESCO.

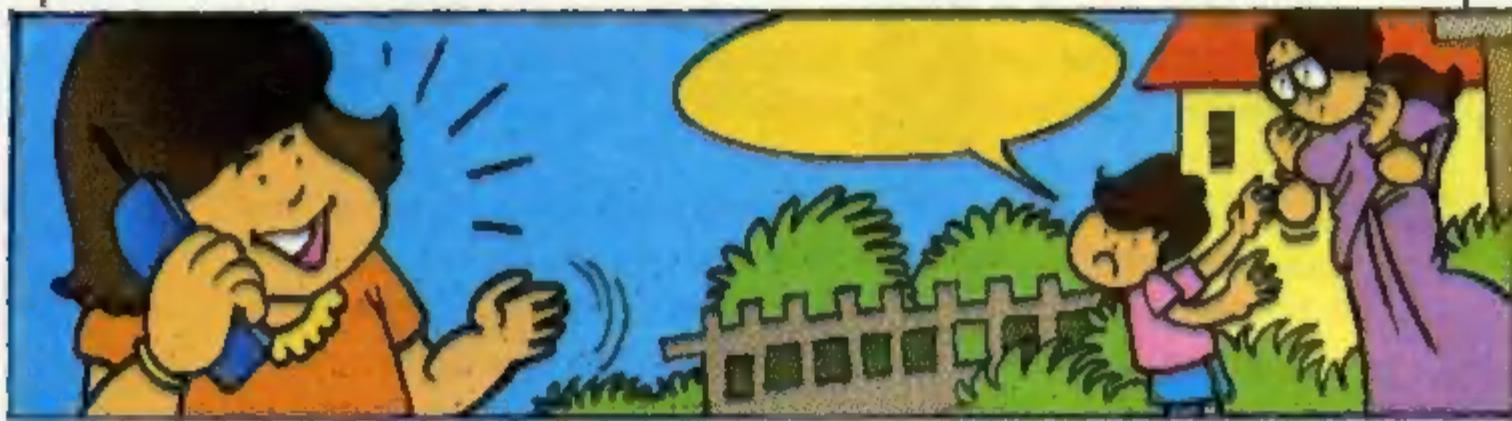
We, one billion Indians, cannot leave India! What is the alternative? We must try to rise above our sect, our religious faith, our region, and our state to be truly Indians. We do that or we perish.

Today some new states are being formed. Some people are not happy with a town or two being taken away from the old state to be added to the new ones. But is anything really being taken away? Is any area going out of India? Formation of new states is a matter of convenience. All is well as long as the areas are a part of India. It is time we thought as Indians and acted as Indians.

NEWS FLASH

YOUR NEW ELEGANT ENEMY

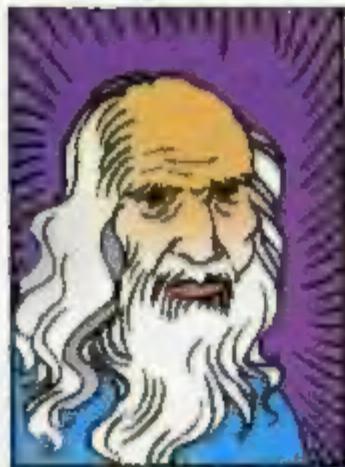
Did you lately request your parent to buy you a cellphone or mobile phone because your friend is carrying one to the class? Do not persist in your demand. Better still, if your friend knows that you have nothing but goodwill for him, suggest to him that he gave up the habit of using the cellphone. It is apprehended by scientists that children who use such phones expose themselves to health-hazards including brain tumour. Research is on, but caution is prudent. After all, such things are a matter of habit.



THE MAN BEHIND MONA LISA

Mona Lisa, painted by the 15th century Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci, is one of the greatest art-pieces ever made. Leonardo is an all-time genius, a man who could foresee the mechanism by which man could fly. He even drew sketches of the flying machine or air-plane.

In his time, the painters often mixed their own blood and saliva with the colours. Now scientist-investigators are out to detect Leonardo's DNA from his painting. The DNA can tell us much about his personality. "We are treating this like a criminal investigation. We are adopting police methods with the help of their forensic scientists," says the director of the Leonardo Museum at Tuscan.

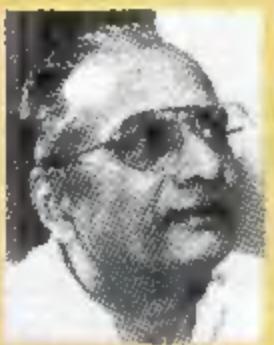


FOOD FOR THE MARTIANS

By Martians, we mean the astronauts of our earth who would be visiting the Mars. The mission would take a thousand days.

Research shows that they have to be vegetarians, depending on 15 plants that can be grown in space. They include carrot, wheat, tomatoes, and soya — and better than all — the black-bean chilli.





A letter from the FOUNDER-PUBLISHER



My dear young readers and friends,

It was a different India when Chandamama was launched. There were fewer publications and practically no magazine for children. The printing method (words composed letter by letter manually) was a far cry from today's magic technology. There were no television, no computer, to mention just two of the many items with which you are so familiar today.

But India was stepping into a new phase of her life. Free from the British rule, the nation must stand on her own feet.

I believed, along with my friend the late Chakrapani, that the India of tomorrow can smile only if we could make the children of today smile; that the India of tomorrow will be a strong nation only if we could make the children of today love their great heritage. They must enjoy good literature together, they must be exposed to the India spirit together. Thus came into being the unique experiment – rather adventure – that is Chandamama – one content and in many languages, an open sesame into India's vast treasure of legends, myths, and folklore for the budding souls.

Chandamama, by and by, became a household name. Through ups and downs it marched ahead. Recently it faced the biggest ever crisis in its life when its publication remained suspended for more than a year. But the indomitable goodwill behind it has triumphed again. I congratulate those brave spirits which rushed to lift the wheels of its chariot which had got stuck and set them on the road to its destination.

This is an occasion for me to be doubly happy, first because the publication is celebrating its 53rd anniversary and second because it has woken up with a new dynamism after a brief stupor.

Godspeed to Chandamama and best wishes to you all.

*Yours sincerely
B. Nagi Reddi*



How good is your handwriting?

Amongst the current fraternity of writers, I must be that very rare person — an author who actually writes by hand!

Soon after the invention of the typewriter, most editors and publishers understandably refused to look at any manuscript that was handwritten. A decade or two earlier, when Dickens and Balzac had submitted their hefty manuscripts in longhand, no one had raised any objection.

Even if their handwriting had been awful, their manuscripts would still have been read. Fortunately for all concerned, most writers, famous or obscure, took pains over their handwriting. For some, it was an art in itself, and many of those early manuscripts are a pleasure to look at and read.

And it was not only authors who wrote with an elegant hand. Most of our parents and grandparents had distinctive styles of their own. I still have my father's last letter, written to me when I was in boarding school in Simla nearly 60 years ago. He used large, beautifully formed letters, and his thoughts seemed to have the same flow

and clarity as his handwriting.

In his letter he advised me (then a nine-year old) about my own handwriting:

"It is not good for you, or for your eyes, to get into the habit of writing so small. Try and form a larger style of handwriting....."

I did my best to follow his advice, and I'm glad to report that after nearly 40 years of my writing life, most people can still read my handwriting!

Although I do all my writing in long-hand, I follow the convention by typing a second draft. But I would not enjoy my writing if I had to do it straight on to a typewriter.

It is not just the pleasure of writing longhand. I like taking my notebooks and writing-pads to odd places.

There are a number of favourite places where I do my writing. One is under the chestnut tree on the slope above my cottage. Word-processors were not designed with mountain slopes in mind! But armed with pen (or pencil) and paper, I can lie on the grass and write for hours.

My friends keep telling me about all

*Once a good handwriting
would bring credit to one —
particularly to a student.
What is the position now, in
the electronic age?*

the wonderful things I can do with a word-processor, but they haven't got around to finding me one that I can take to bed, for that is another place where I do much of my writing... especially on cold winter nights when it is impossible to keep the cottage warm.

While the wind howls outside and snow piles up on the window-sill, I am warm under my quilt, writing-pad on my knees, ball-point pen ready. And if, next day, the weather is warm and sunny, these simple aids will accompany me on a long walk, ready for instant use should I wish to record an incident, a prospect, a conversation, or simply a train of thought.

When I think of the great 18th and 19th century writers, scratching away with their quill pens, filling hundreds of pages every month, I am amazed to find that their handwriting did not deteriorate into the sort of hieroglyphics that make up the average doctor's prescription today. They knew they had to write legibly, if only for the sake of the type-setters.

Both Dickens and Thackeray had good, clear, flourishing styles. (Thackeray was a clever illustrator, too).

Somerset Maugham had an upright, legible hand. Winston Churchill's neat handwriting never wavered, even when he was under stress.

I like the bold, clear, straightforward hand of Abraham Lincoln; it mirrors the man. Mahatma Gandhi, another great soul who fell to an assassin's bullet, had many similarities of both handwriting and outlook.

I want world
sympathy in
this Nettle ?
Right against
Wrong.
Sandi McGamSh
5.4.30

Not everyone has a beautiful hand. King Henry VII had an untidy scrawl but, then, he was not a man of much refinement. Guy Fawkes, who tried to blow up the British Parliament, had a very shaky hand. With such a quiver, no wonder he failed in his attempt!

Hitler's signature is ugly, as you would expect. And Napoleon's does not seem to know where to stop: how like the man!

I think my father was right when he said handwriting was often the key to a person's character, and that large well-formed letters went with an uncluttered mind.

Florence Nightingale had a lovely handwriting — the hand of a caring person. And there were many like her, amongst our forbears.

Creative Contest

Given below is the beginning of a story; it has all the ingredients of turning out to be an interesting tale. But that 'creation' is in YOUR hands! You have to imagine the sequences — possible and probable — and give a finish to the story. Not only finish it, but think up a catchy title (heading), too. Remember, you have to do this exercise in 200 to 300 words — not less, not more. The best entry will get an attractive prize, and the entry will also be published in the magazine. The contest is meant for our young readers. Please remember to mention your name, age, class, name of school, and home address with PIN Code. Prove that YOU can write better than grown-ups; so, don't take their help!

Here goes the story:

One generally takes all gurus of yore to be a serious lot. But there was an exception; this guru enjoyed fun, and he had some funny disciples, too. They were so considerate that they were sad he had to use his legs for going from one place to another. "No, we must not allow him to walk!" said one. The others readily supported him. "We should carry him on our shoulders," suggested one. "But he's too old to keep balance, and it'll be scandalous if he were to tumble down," cautioned a disciple. "All right, then, why not we get him a horse?" That suggestion came after some hard thinking. "That's a grand idea, but let's take our guru's advice," said one disciple, some wisdom dawning on him. Luckily for them, the guru liked the idea. "See if you

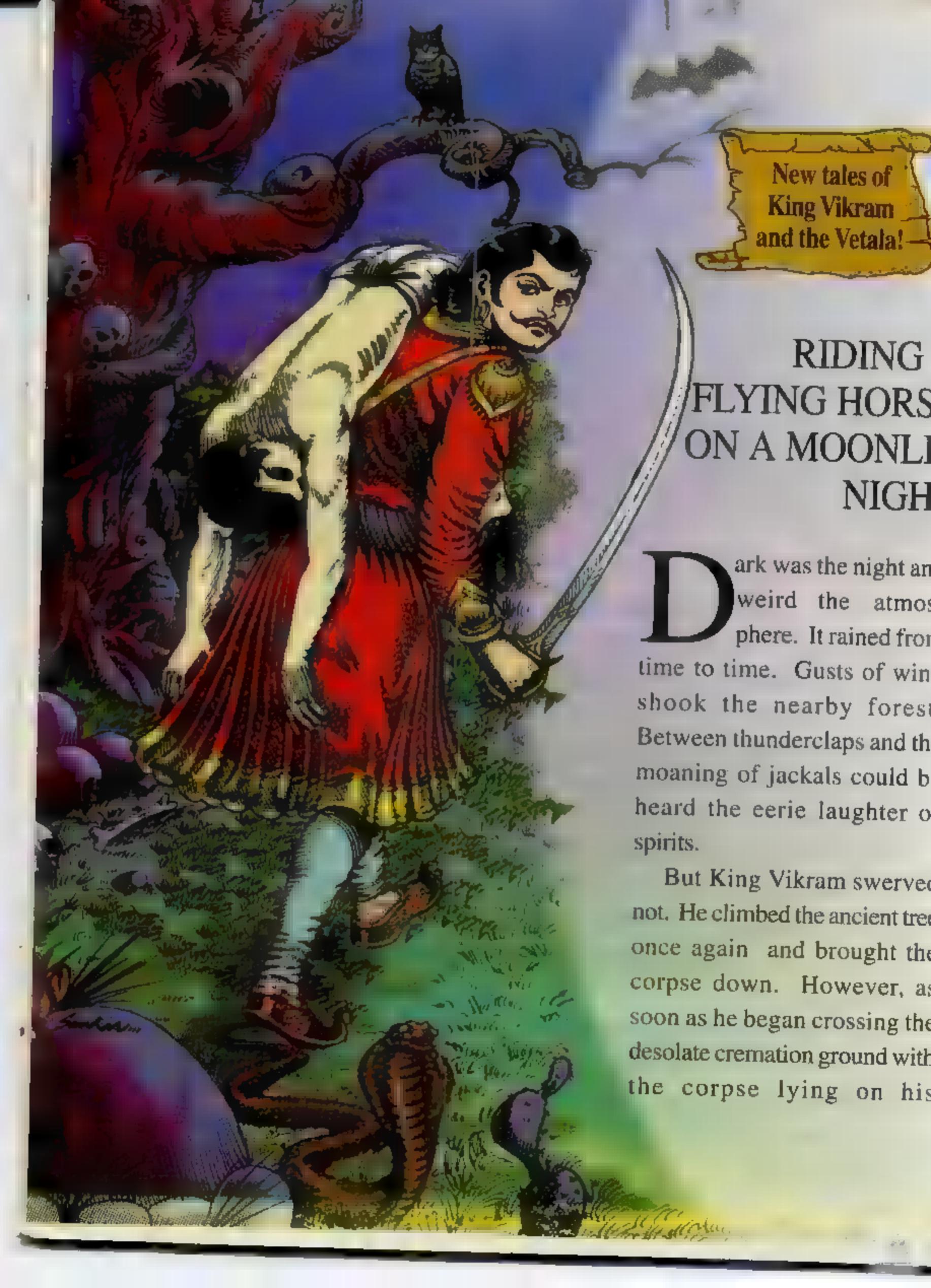
can get a good horse," said the guru. On the way to the market, they saw some horses by the side of the lake. At the market, they found out the prices of horses. They were taken aback. "That's a fat lot of money!" one of them remarked. "I've an idea," butted in a disciple. "Why not we buy a horse-egg and warm it up for the colt to come out?" There was all round appreciation. When they presented the latest proposal to the guru, he said: "I'm glad you've inherited a bit of my wisdom!"

Can you guess what would have happened to the guru and his disciples? Write down your story, and remember to give a title. Send your entries (mark "Creative Contest" on top of the paper.) before July 25. -Editor.

Answers to Discovery of India Quiz (June 2000)

1. (a) The *Dasakumaracharita*, inspired by Gunadhya's *Brihat Katha*.
(b) The *Yogavasishtha Ramayana* is believed to have been jointly authored by the two great Rishis, Vasistha and Valmiki.
(c) The *Mudrarakshasa* by Visakhadatta.
(d) Shudraka. His famous work is the *Mrichhakatika*.
2. Arjuna, Babruvahana, and Ulupi.





New tales of
King Vikram
and the Vetala!

RIDING FLYING HORSES ON A MOONLESS NIGHT

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the nearby forests. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits.

But King Vikram swerved not. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought the corpse down. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying on his



shoulder, the Vetala that possessed the corpse said: "O King, I don't know what your motive is in undertaking this fearsome task. It so happens that sometimes people, at the very end of their endeavour, refrain from enjoying the fruit of their labour. Pratap of Shantipur, for example. I hope, you wouldn't behave like him. Well, let me tell you his story. Pay attention to my narration. That ought to bring you some relief."

The Vetala went on: Indrasen, the King of Shantipur, had a daughter named Devika. The king was extremely fond of her. He began look-

ing for a suitable bridegroom when she grew into a marriageable age.

"Father," said Devika when she learnt about her father's efforts to find a match for her, "I'm not prepared to marry any ordinary prince, however, handsome, brave, or intelligent he might be. The one to marry me must be able to fulfil a condition set by me. If no such suitor is available, I'd rather remain a virgin forever."

"What's your condition, my child?" asked the king.

"Be he a prince or a commoner, he must be able to fetch a white flying horse for me to ride and fly on a full-moon night," said the princess.

The king laughed. "My child, you and I have read of such horses in fairy-tales. But I've never known or heard of any such creature being really there anywhere. Perhaps, flying horses are there in the realm of gods or supernatural beings," he said.

But Princess Devika was not willing to forget her condition. The king willy-nilly, announced it, at the risk of being laughed at by other kings.

No prince or commoner came forward with any promise of even trying to find a white flying horse. A whole year passed.

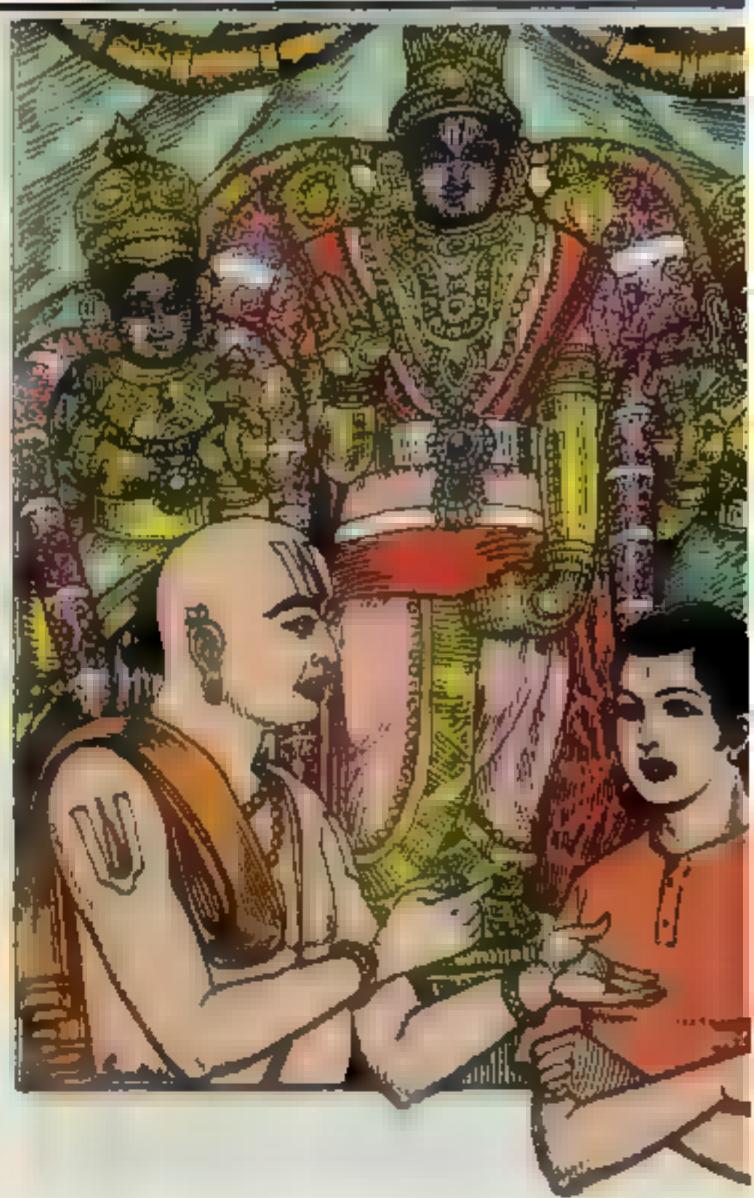
In a remote village of the kingdom lived Pratap, a young man of extraordinary qualities. On one hand, he was ■ pastmaster in the art of floral decoration and making of garlands. On the other, he had unlimited courage. Once he rescued an entire family from a burning house; another time he saved all the passengers of an upturned boat. On another occasion he went to the rescue of the village chieftain who was about to be grabbed by a tiger. But, for all his feats, he never accepted any reward.

He reflected on the unusual wish of the princess. He believed that the human mind could not imagine anything which was not there at some plane of the universe. Who knows, there could be flying horses somewhere!

Pratap was much attached to the village temple. He would adorn the deities with flowers in such a way that devotees used to marvel at his art. The priest was very fond of him.

"Pandit-ji, do you know if there are flying horses anywhere?" one day he asked the priest, casually.

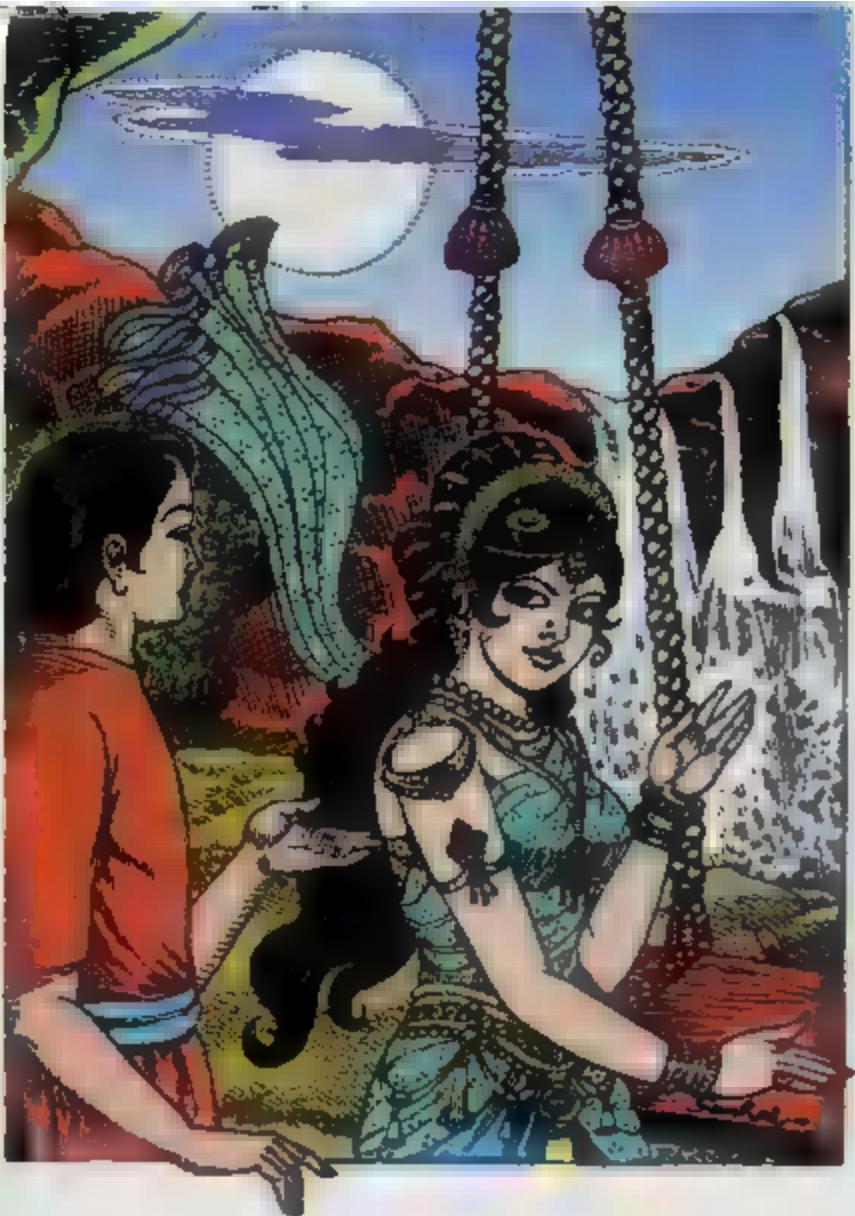
"Flying horses, it is believed, can be seen in the realm of the Gundharvas," said the priest.



"Is that so?" Pratap was curious.

"Once I met a traveller who had spent a night in a wonderful valley in the Vindhya mountains. The valley has a charming lake surrounded by fragrant flower-bearing trees. On full-moon nights, nymphs, the Gundharva damsels, come there for playing and bathing. They descend there riding flying horses," said the priest.

The very next day Pratap began his journey towards the valley. The day he reached there was the day leading to ■ full-moon night. He found the valley enchanting. There were lovely



waterfalls and the atmosphere was delightful with trees full of fragrant flowers. Strange birds produced such sweet music which Pratap had never heard.

He plucked some select flowers and made a beautiful swing. It hung from a tree near the lake. He then sat hiding behind a rock.

The sun set and a golden moon slowly rose above the trees. Suddenly Pratap saw a string of flying horses descending on the banks of the lake. But none of them was white. Seven or eight Gundharva damsels got off

the horses and jumped into the lake. They giggled, sang, swam, and played for an hour and then departed, hopping on to their horses. Only one of them happened to see the swing. She came near it, examined it, and seemed to like it very much. As she sat on it, Pratap came out from hiding and began pushing it. She was surprised, but she enjoyed swinging, too. After a while, she got off the swing, looked at Pratap, and said in a pleasant voice: "It is rarely that a human being comes here. Even if one comes, he's not likely to find us, for we come only on full-moon nights. Is it a mere coincidence that you're here tonight?"

"No, my heavenly sister, it is not a coincidence," said Pratap. He then told her what had brought him there.

"I compliment you for your spirit of adventure. But how funny and unrealistic is the wish of the princess!" observed the damsel.

"My sister, don't you have a white flying horse?" Pratap asked.

"We have only one. I can lead you to it, but whether the horse would oblige you or not is a different matter," said the damsel.

She made Pratap sit behind her on her horse and flew up. In a few mo-

ments they were in the Gundharva realm.

The damsel showed the white horse to Pratap and said: "If the horse obliges you, well and good. Otherwise you can clap your hands five times and I'll be here. My horse will then drop you near the lake."

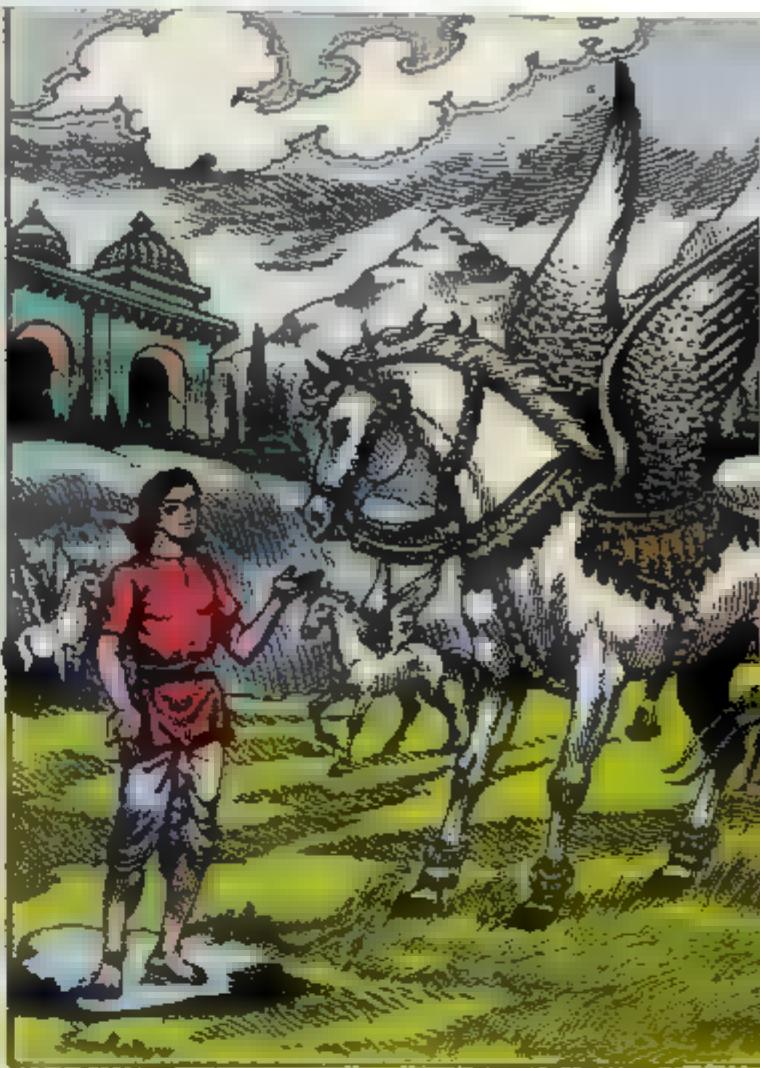
Pratap bowed to her. He then proceeded to the solitary white horse with some beautiful garlands which he had brought with him. He greeted the horse and said: "You are unique. I've come all the way to see you. Will you allow me to decorate you?"

The horse agreed to the offer.

When Pratap finished decorating her, the horse saw its reflection on a pool and was happy. "What can I do for you?" it asked.

Pratap told her all about the whim of the princess. "O charming white flying horse! Let at least some human beings see you and one or two experience a ride on you. Must you remain only a creature in fairy-tales?"

The horse consented to Pratap's proposal. Pratap rode it. It went at great speed through clouds and descended in the palace garden. The princess and her maids were enjoy-



ing the full-moon night, strolling or frolicking. They stood stunned at the sight of the strange horse.

"O Princess, here's the white flying horse. You can have a ride for a while. The friendly horse will then leave you here and depart for its own realm. I'm happy that your fantastic wish is going to be fulfilled. Good-bye," said Pratap. He did not wait for the princess even to thank him or ask him who he was. He went away hurriedly.

The Vetala paused and asked King Vikram in a challenging tone: "O King, was not Pratap's conduct perplexing? The princess had announced her

readiness to marry the person who could give her an opportunity to ride a white flying horse. Through his bravery and extraordinary qualities, Pratap did succeed in fulfilling her wish. Why then did he give up the chance of marrying her? Why at all did he take such pains if he was to spurn the crowning glory? Answer me if you can. Should you keep mum though you may know the answer, your head would roll off your neck!"

Forthwith answered King Vikram: "There was nothing perplexing about Pratap's conduct. He was a lover of adventure apart from being brave. As you had stated, he never cared for rewards for his deeds. He refused to benefit by his actions in saving people from dangers. His joy lay in achievements alone.

"He was an artist by temperament and not one ambitious for any higher position. The Gundharva damsel's comment on the nature of the princess must have influenced him to an extent. Her observation that the princess was funny and unrealistic, was absolutely correct. One who can be so serious about such a whim can be equally demanding in life again and again. It is by chance that Pratap could fulfil her desire once. Who can do the same again and again? In any case, Pratap's inspiration was his love for achieving something fantastic and not his love for the princess."

No sooner had the king concluded his answer than the Vetala, along with the corpse, gave him the slip.



SAMARITAN'S SAMIR

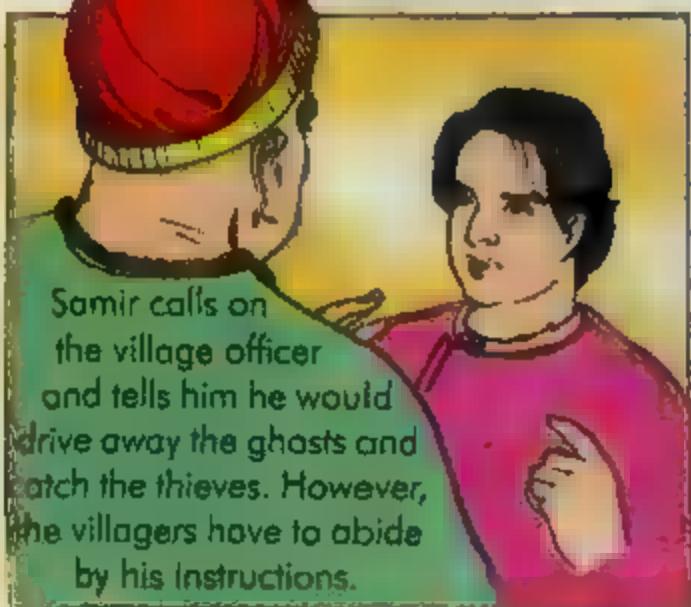
Art: Paani

Fear stalks the residents of Ratnapuri.



Into their midst comes Samir, a stranger to the village, accompanied by his pet dog, Sheru.

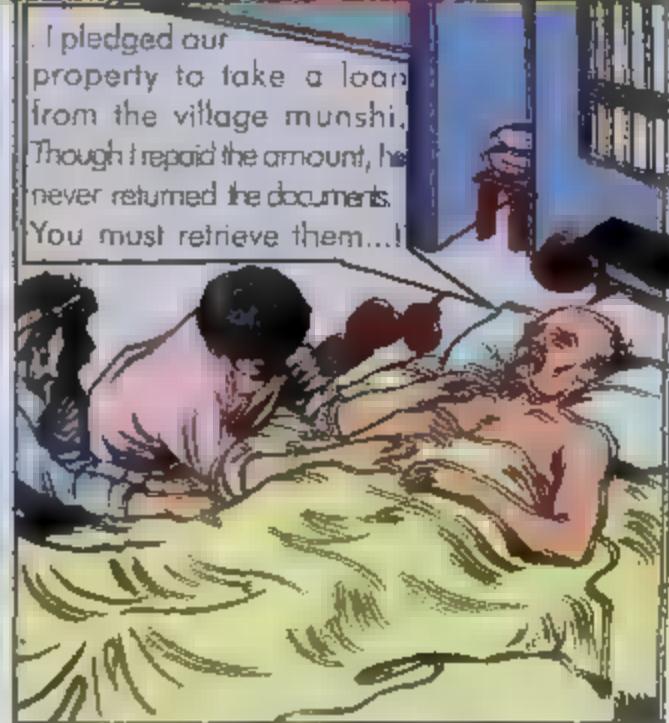
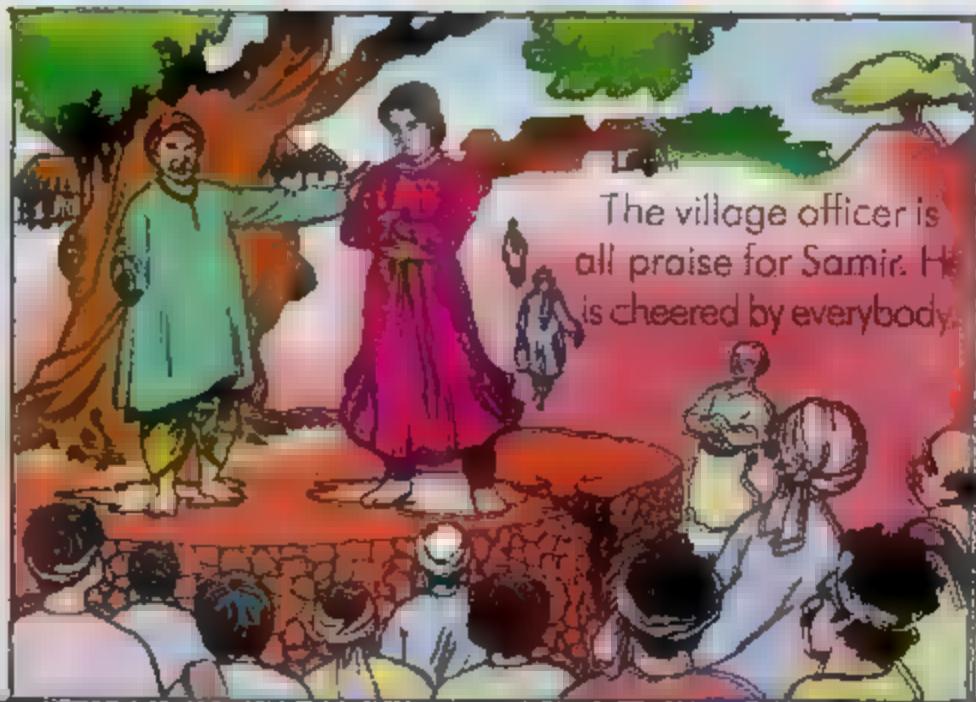
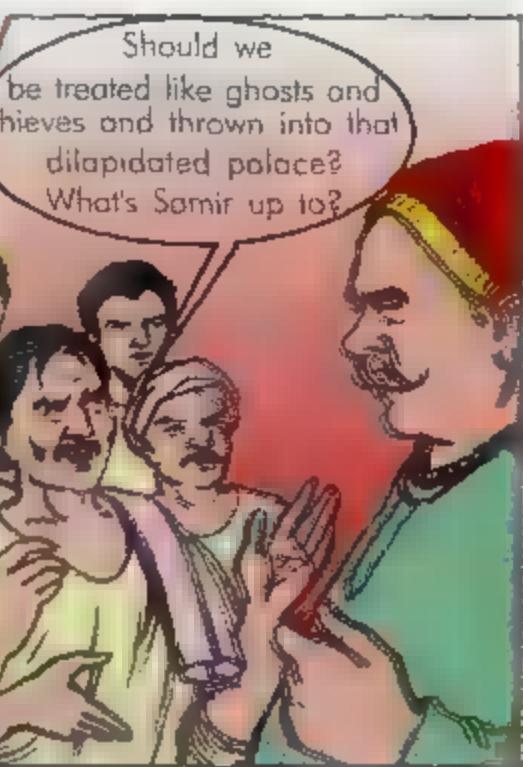
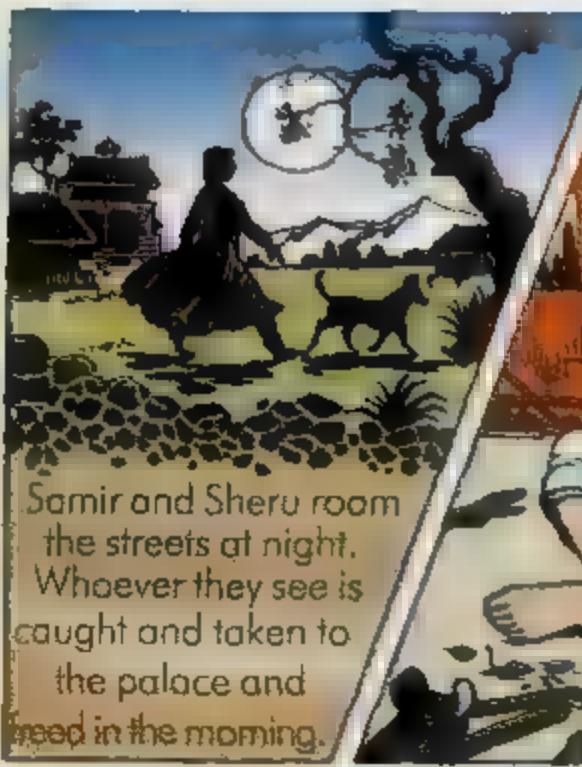
They tell him of the ghosts in the palace, now in ruins, and of thieves on the prowl. A wanderer, Sami is not afraid to make the old palace his home.

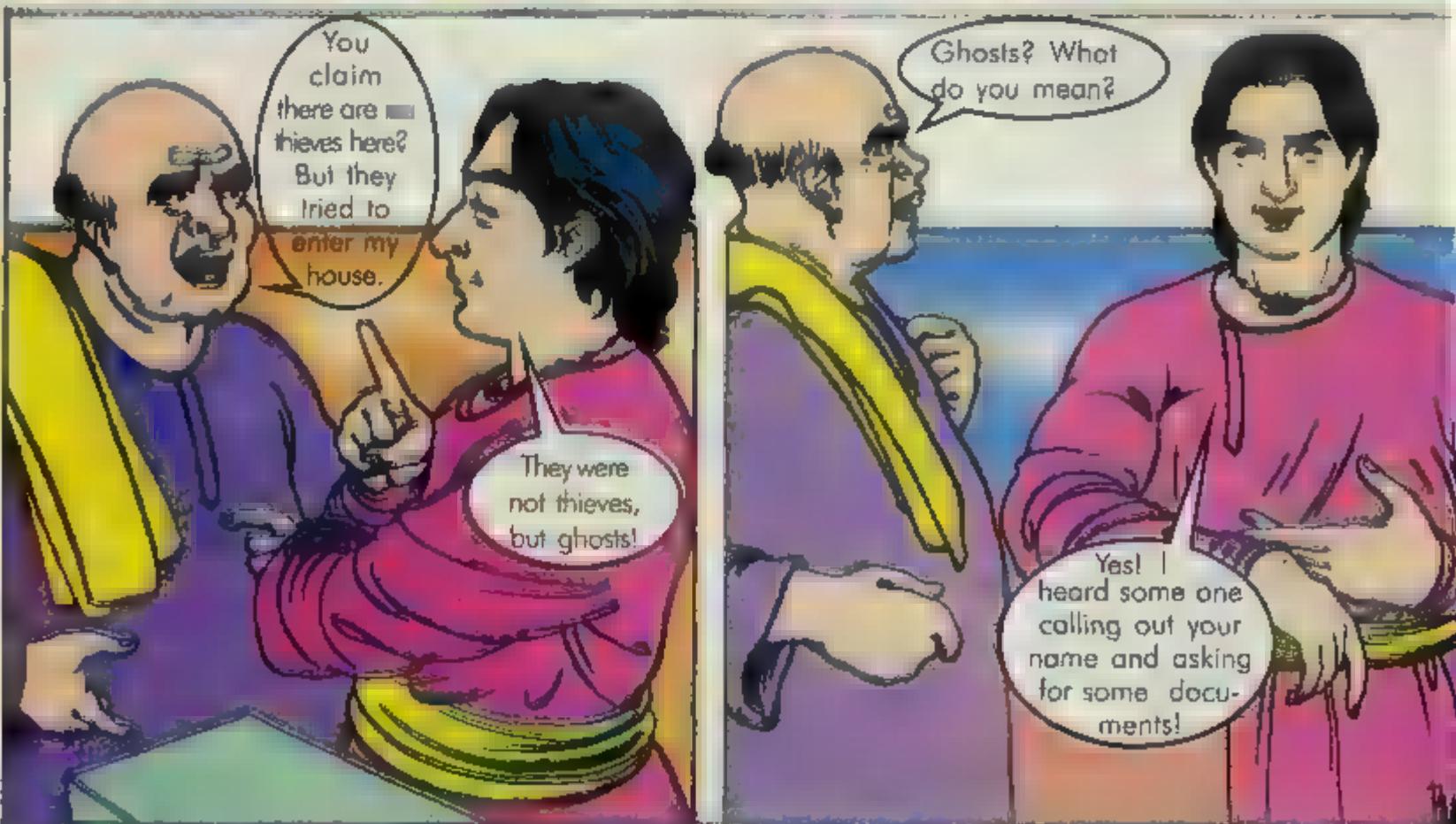


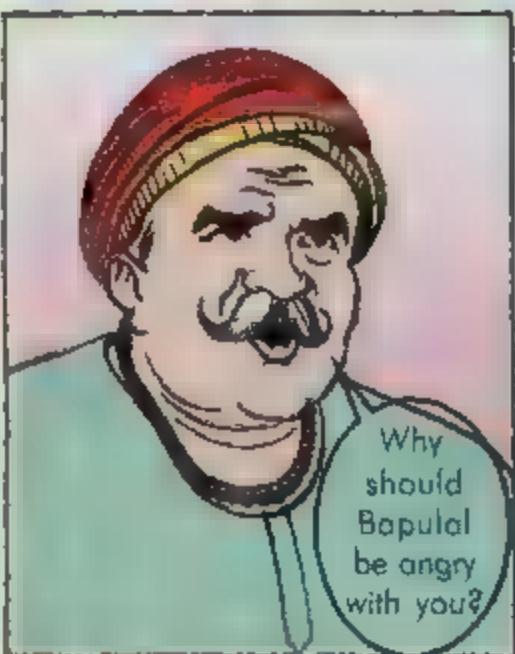
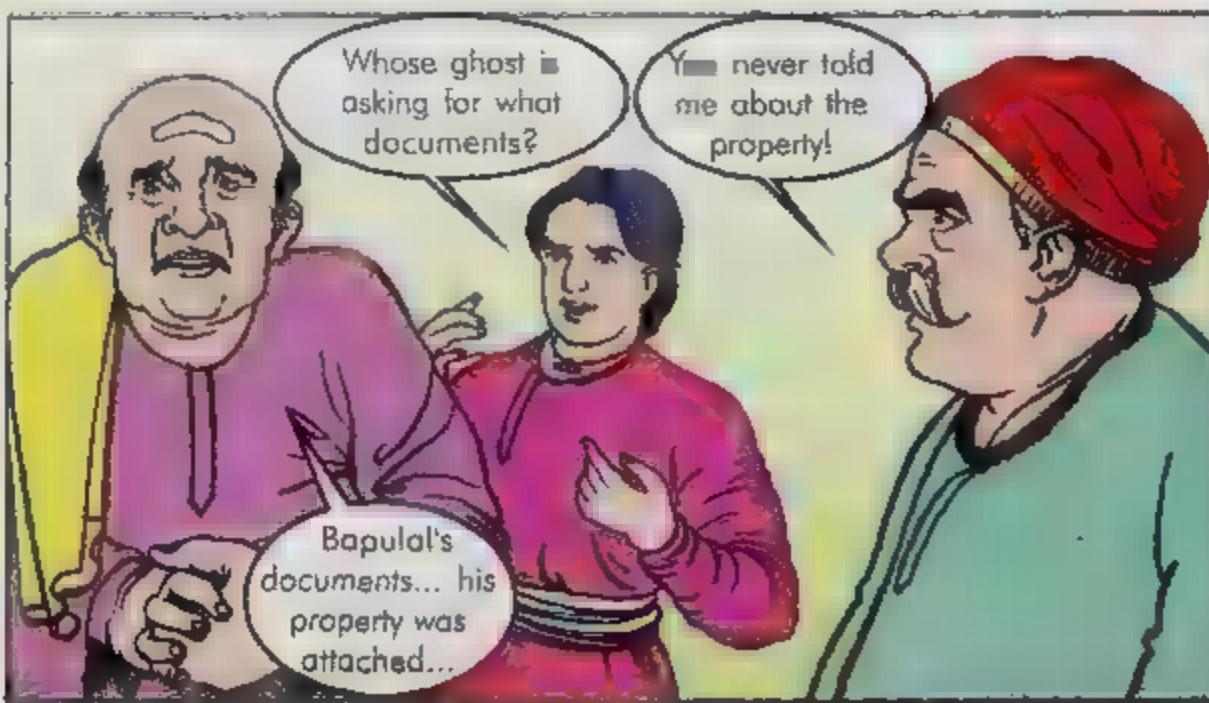
Samir calls on the village officer and tells him he would drive away the ghosts and catch the thieves. However, the villagers have to abide by his instructions.



Suno! Suno! Listen! Nobody should come out of their houses after sunset! Samir's orders! Thieves beware! Khabardar!







Next week: Another adventure



BUNTU AND THE LONG BEARD

The problem with Buntu was, he could never serve one master for any reasonable length of time. How could he? This is what happened at the house of his new employer, Gulab Bakshi, who had ■ long beard.

Bakshi developed the habit of calling Buntu a fool whenever the boy made the slightest mistake. By and by Bakshi grew so fond of the word that he called Buntu a fool even when the boy had made no mistake.

One winter night, Bakshi relaxed in an armchair and asked Buntu to read out a book to him. Buntu, no

doubt, could read a little, but not much. However, he would not show that. He would invent lines and passages himself while looking at the pages as if they were written in them.

While doing so, he pretended to read: "It is a well known fact that anyone possessing a long beard lacks in intelligence. In other words, a man with a long beard is a fool!"

"What? What does the book say? A man with a long beard is a fool?" asked Bakshi, quite agitated.

"Well, Master, that's what the book says — and it also says that

it is a well-known fact," answered Buntu very politely.

"Hm!"

Before Buntu could continue reading from the book, Bakshi's wife called him for some help in the kitchen. Buntu left. Bakshi wondered how many people must have taken him for a fool over the years because of his long beard, of which he was so foolishly proud. The burning lamp that lit the room put an idea into his brain. He gripped his beard at his middle and put the lower part to the flame.

His soft, highly inflammable beard caught fire instantly and he had to give up his grip. In a few seconds the entire beard was gone and the moustache too — and even his eyebrows. He drew his shawl

and wiped his face.

His wife came in and gave a cry of horror looking at his hairless face.

"I only wanted to shorten, for it is written that men with long beards are fools," explained Bakshi.

"Where is this piece of wisdom written?" demanded his wife. Bakshi pointed at the open book. His wife looked through it. There was no such statement.

The angry Bakshi summoned Buntu.

"Where is it written that men with long beards are fools?" he demanded.

"It will be written now, for has it not already been proved by you?" said Buntu in reply — and, of course, he was not expected to be seen in that household any longer!





THE DEMON'S SYNDROME

Once upon a time, there was a physician in a village close to a forest. His name was Raghunandan. He knew the secret of beneficent plants and herbs. He collected them from the forest and prepared medicines out of them. He succeeded in curing most of the people who went to him for treatment. But he never demanded any fee from his patients.

His wife, Kamini, did not approve of this. She always murmured about his generosity.

"Even if I don't charge any fee, my patients give me whatever amount they can, don't they? Many of them also bring costly gifts. It's better this way rather than charging a fixed

amount as fee," Raghunandan used to argue. "Besides, I give only medicines. It's god who cures," he would add, modestly.

It was midnight, and both Raghunandan and his wife had retired to bed and gone to sleep when someone knocked on the door.

"There seems to be no respite from your worthless patients even at this hour of the night!" grumbled Kamini.

Raghunandan quietly opened the door, but had the shock of his life at the sight of his visitor. It was a demon!

"Don't be afraid. I've come to you as a patient," said the demon.



"Welcome," Raghunandan managed to say. "Tell me, what's your ailment?"

"I feel drained of all energy and feel sleepy. But sleep never comes to me! I'm always panting, sweating, and feeling thirsty," complained the demon.

"I understand. The disease is called the demon's syndrome. I think I can cure you, even though you have come to me rather late," said Raghunandan, feeling the demon's pulse.

He then prepared some powder and made the demon gulp it with a spoonful of honey.

"You'll get relief in an hour. If you take this regularly for a fortnight, you'll get back a demon's strength," said Raghunandan.

"I feel so happy. I'll be here again tomorrow, at this hour," said the demon as he left them.

Kamini took her husband to task as soon as the demon left, for not charging him a heavy fee. "You can be liberal towards your fellow human beings, but why towards a demon? He's not going to be of any service to you in the future!" she said.

Raghunandan only shrugged his shoulders, and said nothing.

The demon showed up every night and looked happier and happier. One night, while Raghunandan was preparing the medicine, Kamini lowered her voice and told the demon, "You know, uncle demon, my husband is too shy to tell you about this, but he spends a lot of money on the medicine which he prepares for you."

"Is that so? Well, how much do you think I should pay him?" asked the demon.

Kamini hemmed and hawed and said, "How about ten gold coins!"

"Ten gold coins!" laughed the demon.

After the demon had left Kamini

told her husband, "Your midnight patient is ■ miser."

Raghunandan, as usual, only shrugged.

Next day Kamini told her husband that she was going to her parents for ■ day or two. However, after leaving the house, she sat hiding behind a bush. The demon, as usual, came there at night and the physician handed him the medicine. When the demon left for his dwelling, Kamini followed him.

After an hour she found out the demon's cave. Instead of returning home, she took shelter in another cave. Next night, when the demon left the cave for the physician's house, she entered his cave and saw two sacks full of gold coins and ornaments.

She goggled her eyes in disbelief. She then took both the sacks in her arms and hurried home. Midway she saw the demon returning. She hid behind a tree and then, after ■ while, reached home and buried the sacks in the cowshed.

It was already dawn.

"What was the urgency in leaving your parents' home at night to reach here so early?" asked Raghunandan.

She gave no answer, but she be-



gan panting and sweating and said: "I feel breathless."

"Lie down in peace. Let me see what the matter is with you," said Raghunandan.

"I feel awfully thirsty," said Kamini.

The physician felt her pulse and said: "This seems to be the human version of the demon's syndrome! However, you'll get much relief with the very first dose of medicine."

He gave her the medicine. But, to his surprise, he saw no improvement in her condition till the evening. He felt anxious.

The demon reported to him at midnight.

"Sir! I feel as healthy and energetic as I was ten years ago. I hope my treatment is over," he said.

"Yes, it's over. You need not worry on that count any longer," answered Raghunandan.

"Over the past years I had collected lots of gold, in the form of coins as well as ornaments. I had arranged them in two sacks to give them to you as a token of my gratitude. Unfortunately, someone stole them from my cave last night. Since my dwelling has become known, I should go over to another cave in another forest. Some day in future, I'll pay back my debt to you," said the demon.

"Oh no, you need not. Please take your wealth back," cried out Kamini from the next room. Both Raghunandan and the demon were taken aback.

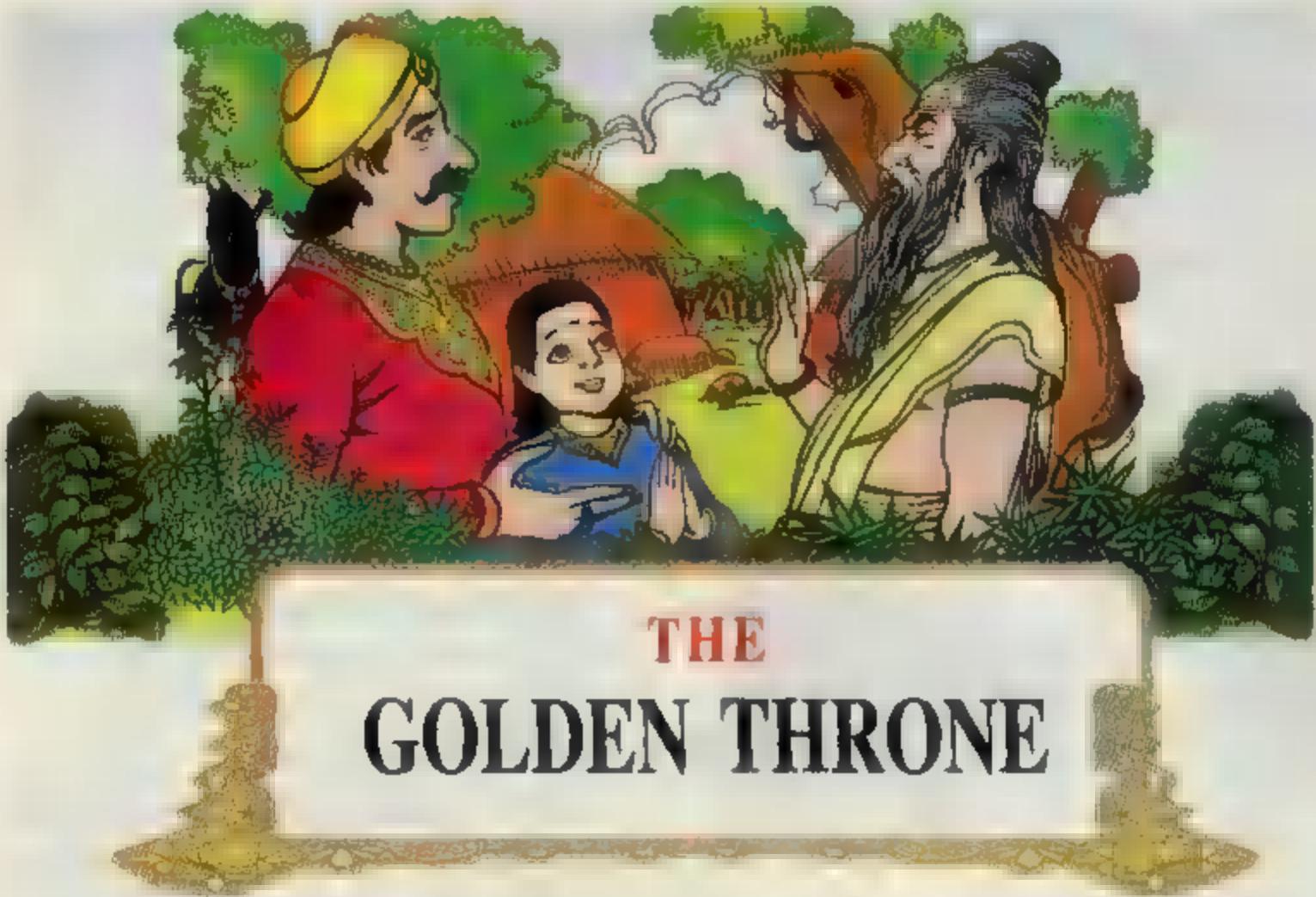
Kamini toddled in and narrated what she had done because of her awful greed. Sobbing, she said: "The gold you had collected through force brought me your disease along with it. Please take it back and save my life. I know, no medicine will work unless I'm relieved of my guilt."

The demon nodded and said: "Let's forget whatever has happened. Spend the wealth for some good cause. That'll bring happiness to you as well as to me."

He then left.

Raghunandan understood why his medicine had failed to work on his wife. However, the moment they decided to spend the wealth for putting up a large hospital for the poor, Kamini began to recover. She became normal in a week. By then the work on the hospital also began.





THE GOLDEN THRONE

[The story so far: The kingdom of Kaundinya is under threat of invasion by three neighbouring kingdoms, including Kalindi. Vijayadatta, a brave and intelligent prince, rushes from his gurukul to be of assistance to his father Sridatta. Princess Srilekha of Kalindi escapes to Kaundinya where she is hurriedly married to Vijayadatta. This prompts her father Madhavasena to decide not to side with the invaders. When the ground close to the palace of Kaundinya is dug, a golden throne is discovered. Sridatta wants his son to ascend the throne which is adorned with the images of beautiful maidens — three each on either side — on the steps. As the couple climbs the first step, the image on one side comes alive and narrates a story with a quiz at the end. Vijayadatta spells out a satisfactory answer. He has to satisfy the other maidens before he takes the next steps. Read on.]

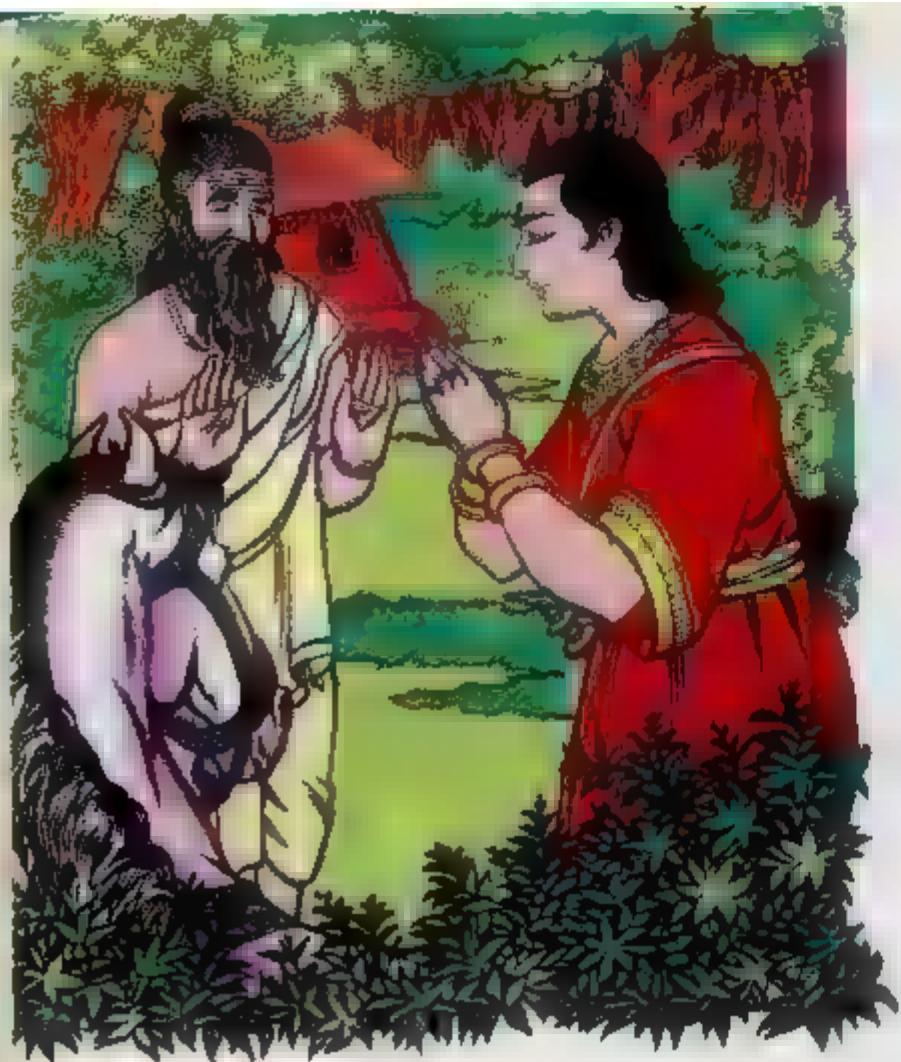
After Prince Vijayadatta had climbed the first step of the golden throne, he waited for a word from the image on the second step. And this is the story she narrated:

Long ago Suvarnagiri was ruled by Kushadhwaja, an upright and pious king. He had a council of ministers and

they helped him run a good administration. He was an immensely popular king.

King Kushadhwaja had only one son, Malayadhwaja, who was a prodigy. He picked up every lesson incredibly fast. On the advice of his ministers, the king sent the boy to the

7. A PRINCE TAKES REVENGE



gurukul run by Sage Krishnachandra, a renowned scholar of the time.

The prince excelled the other students in the gurukul in everything and became the guru's most successful student. He had just completed his studies when some very tragic news reached him. His parents, while asleep, had been treacherously assassinated by Vajrakirti, the ruler of the neighbouring kingdom. Vajrakirti had several times tried to conquer Suvarnagiri, but had been repulsed by King Kushadhwaja every time. Once he was even captured and it was expected that Kushadhwaja would put him to death. But Vajrakirti was pardoned. The fellow had then returned to his own kingdom humiliated, reducing himself to a laughing stock. He had

now acted in the meanest imaginable way.

Prince Malayadhwaja was shocked. His guru consoled him. "We live in a world where everything is possible, where the evil may triumph for a while, but the good will indeed triumph at last. Now, my boy, I'm most concerned about your safety. Having killed your parents, the devil Vajrakirti poses a threat to your life."

"He is bound to do that, O revered guru! Once a tiger tastes human blood, it always looks for more. I must finish off the tiger at the earliest opportunity. I must avenge the assassination of my noble parents," said the young prince in a determined voice.

"I appreciate your attitude and your determination, my boy. All my blessings are with you," said the guru.

In the guise of a commoner, the prince rode out of the gurukul.

At the outskirts of Suvarnagiri was a tribal kingdom. Though it was a small territory, its chieftain enjoyed an independent status.

The chieftain Simhagupta had been a great friend of King Kushadhwaja. Prince Malayadhwaja requested for a private audience with the chieftain. As soon as the two met, he revealed his identity.

Simhagupta could not speak for a while. He was overwhelmed by two different emotions. On one hand, his

friend's untimely death had shocked him. Now meeting his friend's son thrilled him.

"Son, I'll have no peace unless I see you not only on the throne of Suvarnagiri, but ascending the throne of the kingdom of Vajrakirti. We must destroy him thoroughly."

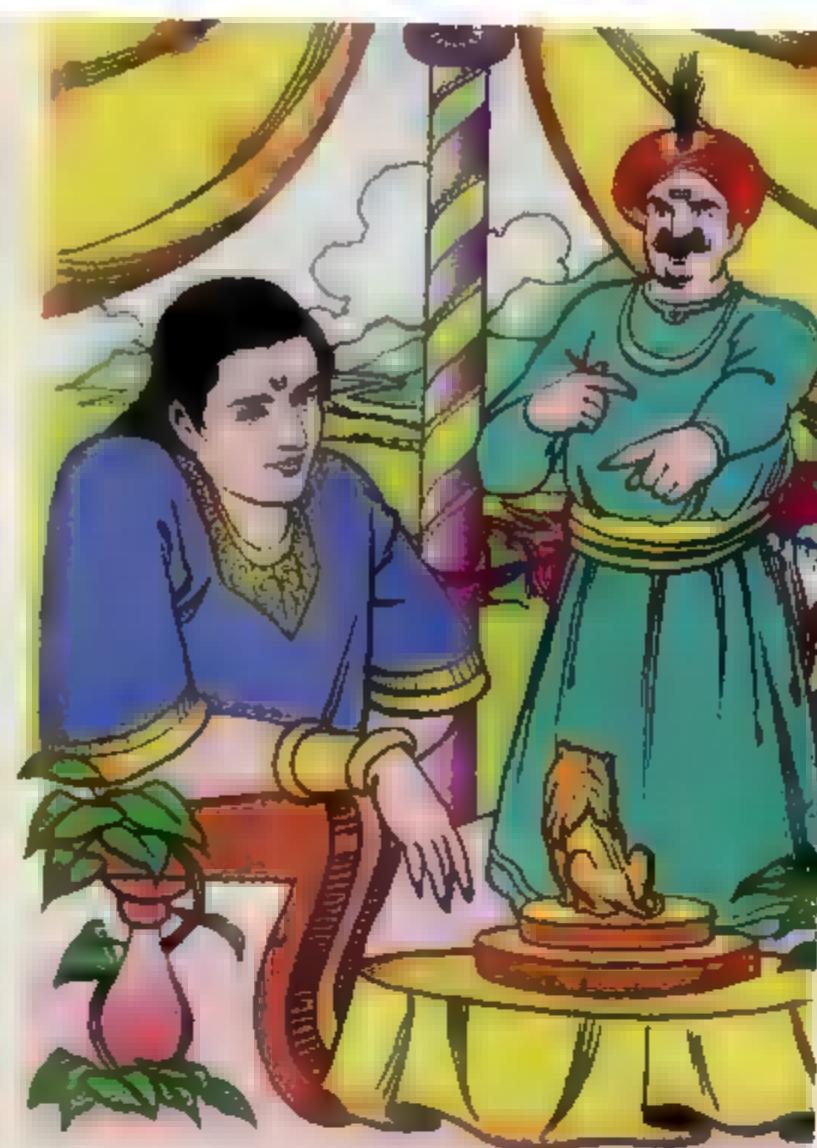
"I'm grateful to you, Uncle. Now Vajrakirti is powerful with two armies, his own as well as ours. It may be difficult for us to confront him in battle. And why should we allow much bloodshed? I've resolved to kill him in the way he killed my parents. Not only him, but also those of my father's confidants who had helped him. How else could he gain entry to my parents' bed-chamber?" said the prince.

Simhagupta looked surprised as well as delighted. He could not help admiring the young prince's determination. At the same time he wondered how he would succeed in achieving his goal.

"My son, how do we go about that?" he asked.

"With the grace of God. Uncle, give me a capable and trusted lieutenant, some money and jewels, and a few poison-tipped needles. I have a curved sword hidden under my clothes. I don't need anything more," said Prince Malayadhwaja.

"Very well. Sleep well tonight. You'll get all that you've asked for in the morning," said Simhagupta.



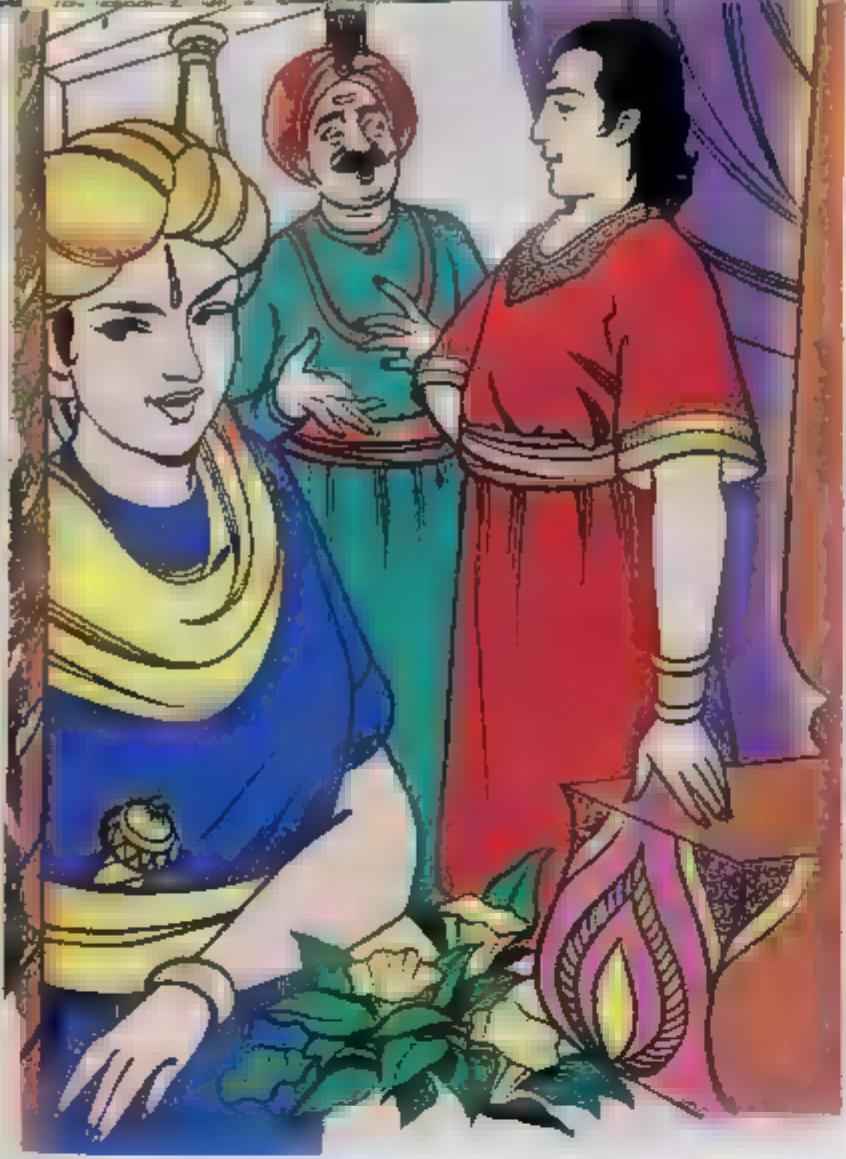
In the morning Simhagupta met the prince. Along with him was a bright youth.

"My boy, this young soldier, who had heard much about you, is most willing to take any risk for your sake. I could not have found a more trusted companion for you," said Simhagupta.

The prince looked with piercing eyes at the soldier's face. With a meaningful smile, he said. "I welcome Princess Shalini to give me company."

While Simhagupta looked puzzled, the princess in disguise blushed.

"But, my son, how could you recognise her so easily?" asked Simhagupta.



"Well, Uncle, just as she had heard of me, I too had heard of her. I knew that she loves adventure and is quite skilled in handling arms. But I was sure of her identity because she very much resembles you!" explained the prince.

"My son, whatever you wanted is ready. Let the goddess of victory shower her blessings on you," said Simhagupta.

Malayadhwaja and Shalini set out before long. It was evening when they reached the frontiers of Suvarnagiri.

As they took rest in an inn, Shalini asked Prince Malayadhwaja: "The explanation you gave my father as to how you recognised me is not quite convincing. How did you really know me?"

"Brave ladies, while participating in war or at a time of emergency, might look quite stern. But at all other times their natural tenderness is bound to show. The moment I saw you, I knew that you were a woman. Next, because I had heard about your unusual fondness for daring deeds, I concluded that you were Princess Shalini," said the prince.

They took rest for a while. When everybody had gone to sleep, they tiptoed out of the inn, leaving their horses there.

They walked into the town. Not far from the palace was the house of Suketa, a retired bodyguard of the king. As they were about to knock on the door, they heard some conversation inside. The prince pressed his ear to the door and heard Suketa telling his wife: "I've lost all interest in life since our king's assassination. How to live in a kingdom usurped by an evil king? My greater anguish is for the foe within — the ungrateful creature who paved the way for the king's assassination."

"Who's that nasty creature? You never told me ..." murmured his wife.

"Who but Kandarpaketu, whom the king had made the general of his army. The ungrateful traitor!" said Suketa, lowering his voice.

Malayadhwaja now knocked on the door mildly. "Who is it?" asked Suketa.

"Friends!" responded the prince.

The door opened. While Suketa kept looking at the visitors, his wife

standing behind him raised the lamp.

The prince and Shalini entered the house.

"Don't you recognise me, Suketa?" asked the prince, smiling.

Suketa instantly knew who he was. Tears rolled down the old man's cheeks. But there was no time to lose. They sat down and drew their plan of action.

In the morning, Suketa fetched from the palace his colleague Guranna. He was now the chief guard of the new king's bed-chamber. Guranna and other palace-workers, like the common people, had reconciled themselves to the change. They knew that they must serve whoever was the king, though they could not get over the memory of King Kushadhwaja who was for them a godly being.

Guranna almost fainted when he saw Malayadhwaja. But he soon recovered and promised to do the prince's bidding.

"Let your allegiance to my father be proved now. Here's your reward," said Malayadhwaja, handing him a piece of jewel.

"My lord, let me not take it now. If someone were to see it, he will suspect me," said Guranna politely returning the gift to the prince.

Next, Suketa fetched Veeranna, the guard of Kandarpaketu's inner apartments. The selfish fellow had been very close to Kandarpaketu and had been



amply rewarded for his collaboration in the conspiracy. He felt terribly nervous when he saw the prince. Malayadhwaja knew that the fellow must be tackled differently. He caught hold of his hand and pierced it with a poison-needle. Veeranna's face indicated unbearable pain — as if he had been bitten by a scorpion. The prince pressed his palm on his mouth before he could shout. Shalini and Suketa tied him to a pillar.

Suketa went out again and brought Veeranna's wife and child to his house under some pretext. At once the prince touched them with the tips of ■ different needle. They felt no pain, but fell down unconscious.

"Veeranna, you must repent for your vile treachery and join hands with me or die like a dog. You have been injected with scorpion poison. Tomorrow it will be cobra poison for you and your dear ones," said the prince grimly.

"Pardon me, my lord. I'll do as you say," mumbled Veeranna.

The prince pierced him with another needle. He was relieved of the pain.

"Our mission must be accomplished tonight itself. Till then your wife and child will remain here. If you collaborate with us, you'll certainly see them alive tomorrow," said the prince. On receiving a nod from him, Suketa untied him.

A little before midnight, with the help of Guranna, Prince Malayadhwaja stealthily entered the usurper Vajrakirti's bed-room and woke him up with a violent shake. "Who are you?" demanded

a surprised Vajrakirti.

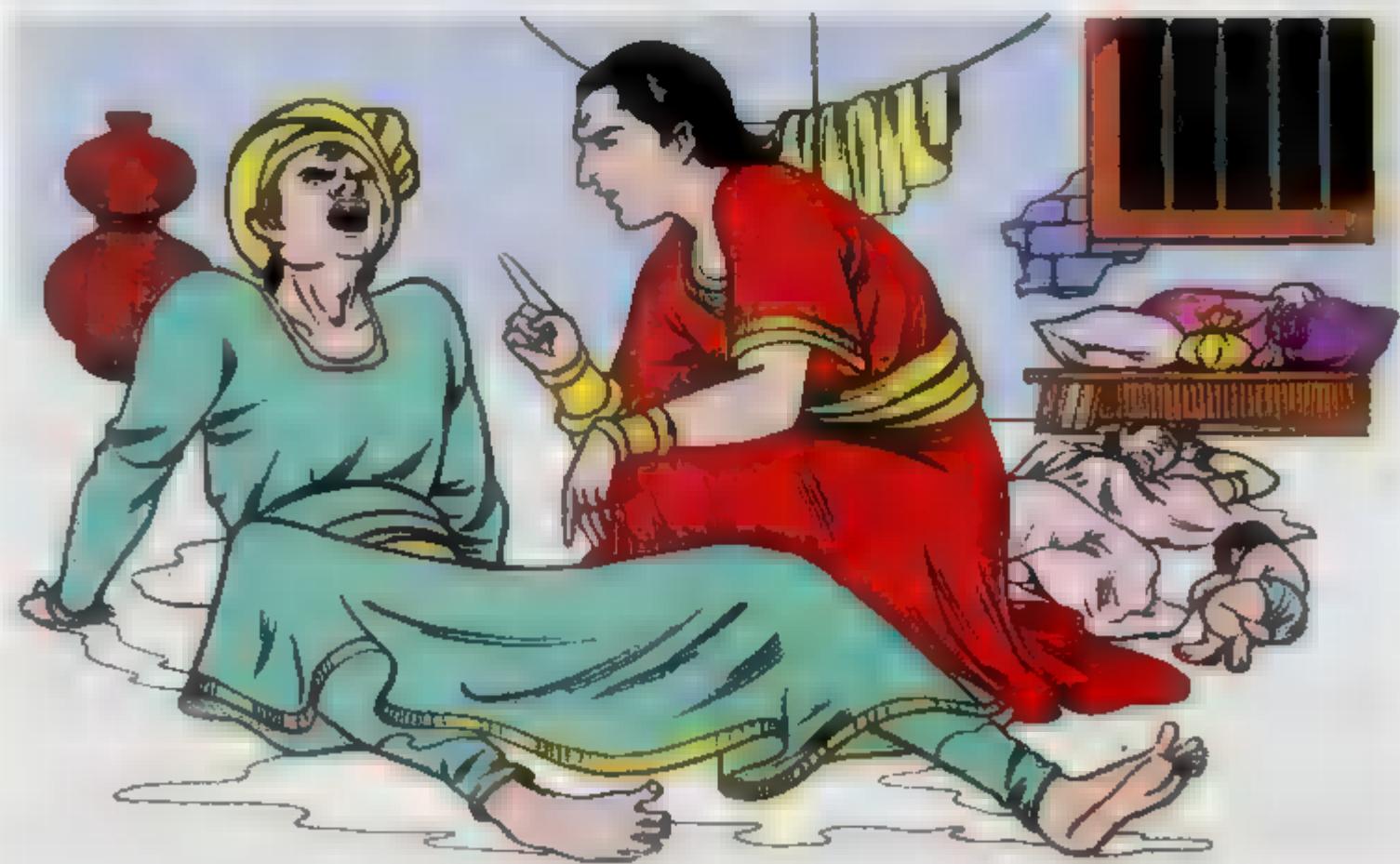
"Who but your death! You killed my father and mother while they were asleep. But I'll kill you while you are awake. I'm the unfortunate son of your victims!" said the prince.

Vajrakirti was about to give out a shriek. But the prince clamped his palm on his mouth and, without a moment's delay, gave him a fatal stab.

At almost the same time, Shalini, with Guranna's help, had entered Kandarpaketu's room. She too woke him up. "I'm only a humble assistant of Prince Malayadhwaja. You're too small a creature to die at his hands. So, I bring to you your death!"

She thrust a poison-needle into his chest. The treacherous commander met with instant death.

(To continue)



Born on the 23rd of July 1856, Bal Gangadhar Tilak or Tilak Maharaj, as he was popularly known, is often referred to as the "Father of Indian Revolution", just as his illustrious colleague in politics, Sri Aurobindo (then Aurobindo Ghose) is known as the "Prophet of Indian Nationalism". Together they gave a radical turn to the working of the Indian National Congress.

Tilak Maharaj was born at Ratnagiri, in Maharashtra. He studied law, but instead of practising as a lawyer, he became a social worker and journalist. He edited two powerful newspapers, the *Maratha* in English and the *Kesari* in Marathi.

In 1897 he launched an annual festival in memory of the great Maratha hero, Sivaji. That went a long way in inspiring patriotic fervour among the people. There was an outbreak of plague in Pune and, under the pretext of preventing its spread, the officials of the British government harassed and humiliated the common people. This made Tilak criticize the British bitterly. As a result, he was accused of sedition and jailed.

In 1907 took place a historic session of the Indian National Congress at Surat. Under the leadership of Sri

BORN

IN THIS MONTH

Aurobindo and Tilak, a large section of the delegates wanted the Congress to demand complete freedom from the British rule. The other section of the delegates, known as the Moderates, was not prepared for such a daring

step. As a result, the Congress broke up. The active section of the Congress held its session under the Presidentship of Sri Aurobindo at which Tilak was the main speaker.

Sri Aurobindo left for Pondicherry in 1910 and Tilak

Maharaj died in the month of August 1920. In December the same year, the Congress at the Nagpur session passed its resolution in favour of complete freedom.

Tilak Maharaj was not only a politician but a great scholar. Among his immortal works are *Gita Rahasya* and the *Orion*.

Said Tilak: "*There are higher powers that rule the destiny of things and it may be the will of Providence that the cause I represent may prosper more by my suffering than by my remaining free.*"

BAL GANGADHAR TILAK





Saga

*Glimpses of a great civilisation –
its glorious quest for Truth through the ages.*



7. THE SAGE FROM AN UNKNOWN ORIGIN



The summer vacation had begun. Chameli and Sandip had all the time to listen to their Grandpa's stories. Whether it was at the dining table or in the drawing room, while enjoying strolls along the river or inside Grandpa's library, the children never let go an opportunity to extract episodes from history, legends, and anecdotes from Professor Devnath.

"Grandpa, the story of Dandakaranya was fascinating indeed, as fascinating as the events which took place in that great forest from time to time," said Chameli.

"And forests were also the sites for schools in ancient India. Am I right, Grandpa?" It was Sandip.

"Right. The Gurukuls of the com-

munities around the Masters were to be found in the forests because the Gurus were Rishis who chose to live in the forests," said Grandpa. "Of course, always on ideal locations—on the banks of rivers or in lovely valleys," he added.

"Lovely!" exclaimed Sandip.

"Grandpa, my brother says lovely, but he could not have lived even for a day in any Gurukul, for they had no badminton!" commented Chameli.

"But I could play plenty of hide-and-seek with my friends! Where can you find in a town the opportunity to play such games?" observed Sandip.

"True, they did not have badminton or tennis or cricket, but they had excellent systems of physical exercises as well as sports. Wrestling, running,

swimming, climbing trees and games galore they had. Kavadi and ha-doo-doo are some of the games coming down to our times, requiring control over breathing as well as plasticity of movement. Besides, boys who came from the Kshatriya clan had to learn archery, fencing, lathi-play, and other exercises," said Grandpa.

"That reminds me, Grandpa, how rigid was the caste system then?" asked Sandip.

"We have no records of the beginning of caste system. But one thing is certain. It was introduced to bring about a harmony between one's nature and one's vocation. There were people who loved adventure and action. They became the vocation of Kshatriyas. There were people who loved trade and commerce. They were Vaishyas. There were then people who were fond of agriculture and service of different kinds. They came to be called the Shudras. Those who liked to devote themselves to scholarship, study, meditation, and such pursuits were the Brahmins. Equal importance was given to all activities. Our commonsense should tell us that to begin with, such classifications could not have been her-

Chandamama



editary," said Grandpa and paused for a while.

"How then did they become hereditary?" asked Sandip.

"For practical reasons. The son of a Brahmin, brought up in an atmosphere of study and rituals would be naturally interested in them. The son of a Kshatriya warrior seeing his father wielding weapons was naturally fascinated to learn the same skill. His father also would have been happy to impart it to him. The same applied to the other streams. So far there was nothing very much wrong in it, for one could obviously change from one stream to an

other. The tragedy began with the sense of superiority and inferiority infesting the tradition. The defect is in human na-



ture, in man's ego. Let us hope, a day will come when we will be able to rise above our ego."

"Are there instances of anyone belonging to one stream changing over to another?" asked Chameli.

"There must have been thousands of instances before the ideal became a hereditary system. Even when it had become a system, it remained flexible for a long time. The Rishis, who were held in esteem both by the king and the commoner, could study one's aptitude and decide to which stream he should belong. Such cases must have been so

many. But one got recorded because it concerned somebody who grew up to be a renowned sage."

"Please, Grandpa, tell us about him." Both Chameli and Sandip shared the curiosity.

Grandpa then narrated the story:

At the outskirts of a forest lived a woman and her only child, a boy. A river flowed by their hut. On the other bank of the river was situated a Gurukul. It was presided over by a great sage, Gautam.

Every morning the boy, while bathing in the river, saw so many boys of his age bathing on the opposite side of the river. Their Guru taught them how to chant the *Gayatri mantra* and how to offer their obeisance to the Sun. How much the boy wished to join them!

One day he expressed his wish to his mother. "Why not meet the Guru and pray to him to enrol you as his student?" suggested the affectionate mother.

Next day the boy swam to the other bank, met the Guru and told him about his desire. The sage must have been impressed. But he must know the child's background so that he could devise a course of study for him.

"What's your caste?" he asked.

"I don't know!" fumbled out the boy.

"Ask your mother and tell me," advised the sage.

The boy met the sage next day and

said that his mother was not aware of his father's caste.

"Never mind. Tell me your father's name," said the sage.

"Sir, I don't know."

"Ask your mother and tell me," advised the sage.

The boy returned the next day, looking crestfallen. As the Guru smilingly looked at him, he said, "Sir, my mother lived as a maid in different households at different times. Once she was married to the servant in a house, but even before she knew anything more than his pet name, an epidemic killed her husband and the household broke and she found herself all alone. After giving birth to me, she has been living near the forest and leading a life by selling wood and fruits collected from the forest."

"My boy, your caste is obvious! You are a Brahmin!" pronounced the Guru, accepting the boy as his student.

"Sir, how did you know that he was a Brahmin?" someone asked the sage.

"Well, a Brahmin is one who always speaks the truth. Naturally, one who always speaks the truth is a Brahmin! The boy or his mother had all the opportunity to utter a lie. But they had the courage and honesty to speak the truth," explained the sage.

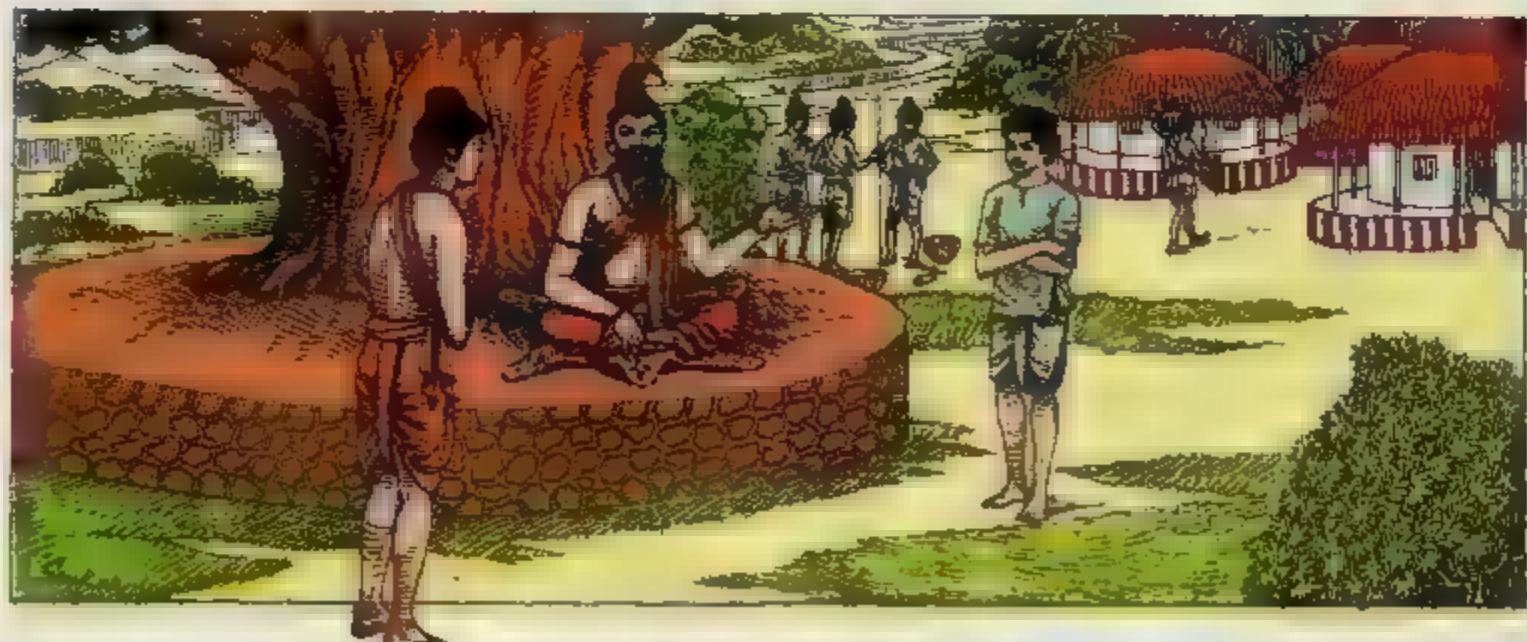
We do not know by what name the boy's mother used to call him. But the Guru named him Satyakama — one who loved truth. Satyakama's mother's name was Jabali. So he came to be known as Satyakama Jabala, as different from other Satyakamas.

"What a great influence the sages exercised on society!" said Sandip.

"And for your information, one who became a sage was above castes," said Grandpa.

- Visvavasu

(To continue)



HIS OWN POSTMAN

Zabir, who had been in the town for already a month, studying in a school, was out in the streets. He asked whoever he met if anybody was going to his village on any business.

But he found nobody. His was not a village of any importance. Occasionally people from his village came to the town, but the townsfolk had no business to take them to his village. And he did not find anybody from his village.

Zabir was sad. How could he keep the promise he had made to his father if he could not find anybody to help him take a letter to his father?

A week passed. One morning, while Zabir was in his class, the teacher said: "Many people have the habit of depending on others for everything. That's not good. The ideal man is one who does his work himself. Why should you look for help from others if you can do something yourself? Never forget this advice."

This brought a new idea to Zabir. He took himself to task for having wasted his time looking for somebody when he himself could do his work.

Next day, Zabir set out for his village early in the morning. It was a long way. With hardly any rest, Zabir walked on and on. Late in the afternoon, he reached the river beyond

which was situated his village. It took a long time for a boat to come. It was night when he reached home and knocked on the door.



His father opened the door and was surprised to see him. "What brings you here?" he asked.

"Father, you asked me to write a letter to you once a month. I wrote my first letter, but found nobody with whom I could send it. So I came myself to deliver the letter to you," Zabir said sportively. "Here it is," he added, pushing the letter into his father's hand.



GOLD BANGLES AT HALF PRICE

Suresh and Shyam were two friends. Suresh was intelligent and active, while Shyam was simple-hearted and rather slow in doing things.

For a long time they were planning to go to the town to buy four pairs of gold bangles for their wives. Something or the other delayed their plan. However, now that a festival was approaching and their wives would very much desire to adorn themselves with new bangles, they decided to proceed to the town without any further delay. Kalu, another villager, had lately been to the town for buying some ornaments on behalf of the vil-

lage landlord. Suresh and Shyam found out from him about the shops in the town selling ornaments.

On their way to the town, Suresh and Shyam found two men quarrelling under a tree. As the words "gold bangles" reached their ears, they grew curious and tried to find out what the quarrel was about.

One of the men told the two friends: "Mine is a strange case. My only daughter is suffering from an unusual disease. No treatment has been effective. I consulted a great astrologer, who is also a Tantrik. He told me that my



daughter's suffering was on account of some of her actions in her previous life. She had cheated someone of gold. If I buy her a pair of gold bangles every day, make her wear them once, and sell them at half the price, then she would be relieved of her karma and get back her health. I was advised to do this for ten days, till the full-moon night. On the day preceding the full-moon night, I was required to adorn her with four pairs of gold bangles and sell them the next day at half the price. Here are the bangles I am out to

sell them. Now, this gentleman is a goldsmith and he at once understood that these are made of solid gold. He wants to buy them. The problem is, while half the price of these four pairs amounts to a thousand rupees, he has only eight hundred rupees, with him. He suggests that he would pledge his gold ring in lieu of the remaining two hundred rupees. But how do I know that his ring is made of real gold? I am not a goldsmith like him!"

"Why don't you accompany me to my village? I'll pay you the full amount!" said the man who was supposed to be a goldsmith.

"Good god! Your village is ten miles away. Must I take the trouble of walking that far? I'm sorry, my friend, I'll rather find out some other customer nearby or proceed to the town and sell the bangles to the very goldsmith who made them. I'm sure, he'd be quite happy to take them back at half their price!" said the first man.

"Well, well, do as you please!" said the second man showing disgust. He then left the scene.

"Sir, it is a pleasant coincidence that we two are in need of four pairs

of bangles. Why should we walk all the way to the town if we can find them midway?" said Suresh and Shyam.

The transaction was over soon. The two friends thanked the stranger, thanked their own good luck, and returned to their village.

"Let's show them once to our village goldsmith," said Suresh as they entered their village.

"What use? A goldsmith was, after all, about to buy them!" commented Shyam.

But Suresh took the bangles to a goldsmith. The man put the bangles to a primary test and told them, "You can give them to your little daughters as their playthings. They are as close to gold as mud is to honey!"

"What!" exclaimed Suresh and Shyam.

The two friends realised that they had been duped. Suresh went home and narrated the incident to his wife. Said she: "Never mind. After all, the bangles could have been of genuine gold. In that case, we would have been the gainers. Leave it to the cheat to suffer the consequences of his own *karma* and forget all about it. Your wisdom cannot be questioned simply because two naughty chaps cheated



you. To be honest, I'm not at all in a hurry to wear new bangles. There are so many better things to do."

But when Shyam narrated the incident to his wife, she burst out: "I always had a doubt about the depth of your wisdom. It appears you were born to be cheated. The festival is only two days away and I must move among the crowd with my old, faded bangles!"

Then, as if in a soliloquy, she said, "Who knows if your so-called friend Suresh was not a party to the drama!"

That shocked Shyam. However, he kept quiet.

Meanwhile Suresh sat exercising his mind. How could the two cheats know about their visit to the town to buy bangles? The only person in the village to know about their mission was Kalu. How honest was Kalu?

Suresh met the landlord privately and told him everything. "Suresh!" said the landlord. "I, too, suspect that Kalu had not been honest with me. Let's see."

The landlord put two of his able-bodied and clever servants on the job, and kept an eye on Kalu's movements. In the evening, Kalu set out for some destination. The servants, in disguise, followed him. The moment Kalu came out

after receiving his share from the two cheats who were his relatives, the servants in disguise caught hold of him and threatened to lead all the three to the kotwal. Kalu fell at their feet and confessed to his mischief.

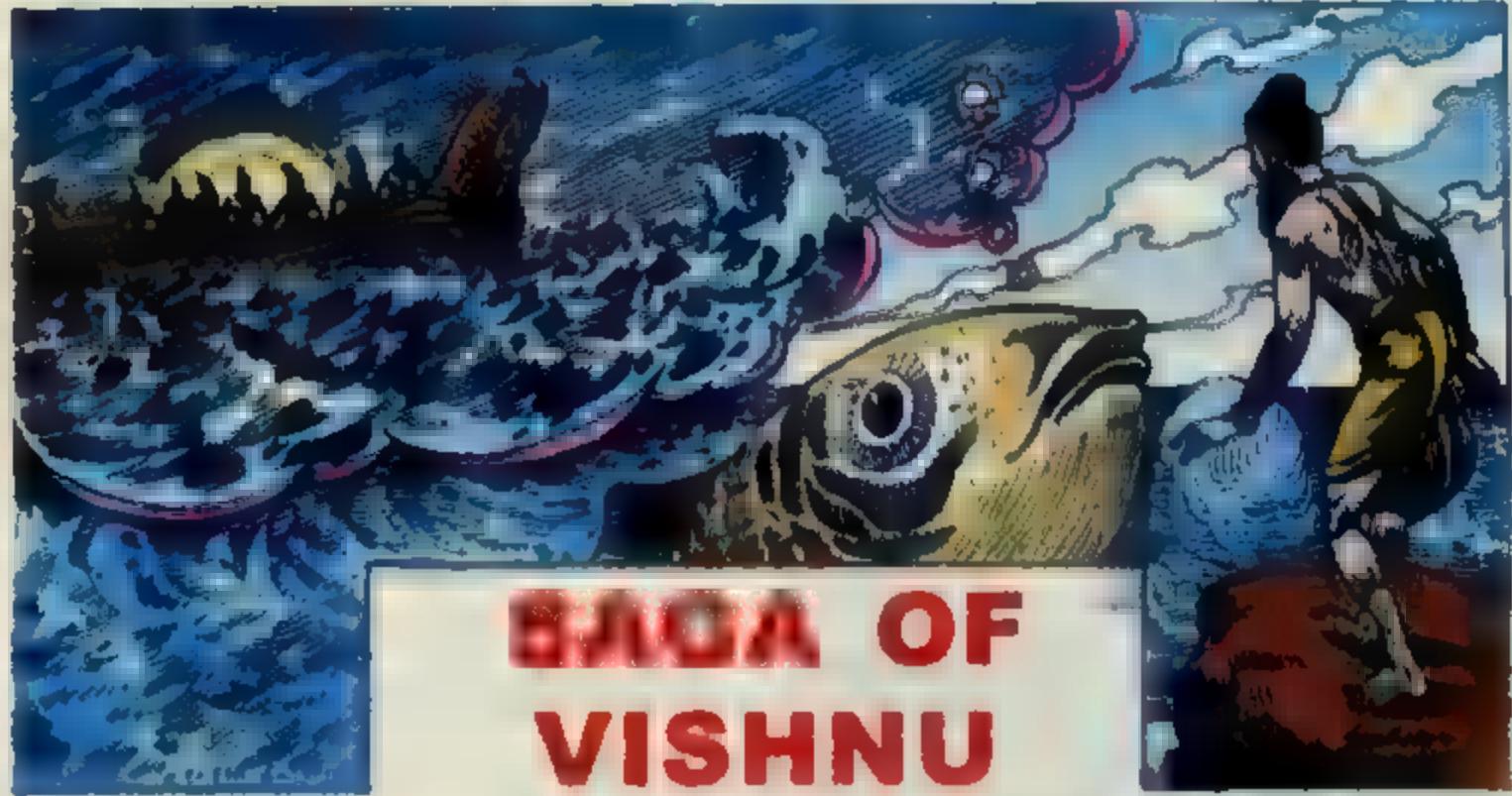
The money was recovered.

"You deserve congratulations for your intelligent way of working!" Suresh's wife complimented him.

"You had no intelligence!" said Shyam's wife to Shyam.

"Intelligence or no intelligence, I've decided to learn from every experience. My friend's wife inspires intelligence in her husband. You inspire in me the need for being alert and cautious," said Shyam.





EPISODE OF VISHNU

As the little fish, whom Sage Satyavrata had sheltered, grew bigger and bigger, he left him in the sea. Time passed. As usual, the sage remained engrossed in meditation. One day, the huge fish came floating to him. He now looked magnificent and supernatural. Satyavrata instantly recognised who the fish was. Hands folded, he said: "O Narayana, who has appeared before me in this unusual form, I bow to thee. Who can unravel the mystery of your action? There must be some strong reasons for you to assume such a form. Now, let me know what instruction you have for me."

"One of the reasons for my assuming this form is to protect you from

the great deluge which is about to submerge the earth", said the fish. "When you see a luminous boat heading towards you with seven illustrious Rishis in it, get into it at once. I shall pull the boat to safety. In that dense and dark atmosphere, the star Dhruva (Pole star) would be my guiding sign. There will be a new creation after the deluge. You'll be the Manu or the fore-runner of that new creation bearing the name Vaivaswata."

Satyavrata bowed to the mighty fish which then disappeared in the distant horizon.

At the end of the cycle of ages, Lord Brahma, the creator, was in deep slumber. Everything was dark, with a cyclonic weather working havoc. Brahma's sleep,

2. THE EPISODE OF DHRUVA



in fact, was a state of trance. While in that condition, he uttered words of great import, descending from the infinity. The words took shape and colour in four groups — white, red, yellow, and blue. They were the four Vedas.

The new creation could not be launched nor could the new cycle of ages begin without the Vedas — containing their secrets. While the gods and the sages eagerly looked forward to the new adventure, their arch-enemy, a terrible demon named Somakasura, was determined to foil the plan. He dared into Brahma's presence and stole the Vedas and

plunged into the deep sea.

The earth was totally lost in the tumultuous water. But Satyavrata could see a luminous boat approaching him. As it came nearer, the seven Rishis seated in it were visible to him.

Satyavrata lost no time in boarding the boat. He carried with him some of the essential medicinal herbs as well as seeds. He observed that the boat was fastened to the horn of the great fish. Through the surging waves the fish pulled the boat speedily in the direction of the Pole star.

Soon the boat reached the peak of a grand mountain. The fish swam away.

Deep down the sea, the demon Somakasur was sure that his mission had been fulfilled. Delighted, he was circling around the cave in which he had deposited the Vedas. The Vedas, meanwhile, had turned into four little children. They were crying in protest against their captivity. The demon gloated over their plight.

Suddenly, what should he see but a huge fish diving towards him? Before he could realise what was happening, four mighty arms came out of the fish. By and by a charming figure emerged out of it. Somakasura knew

that the one confronting him was none other than Lord Vishnu.

The two were immediately locked in a fight. In no time Vishnu vanquished Somakasura, cutting him down to pieces by his all-powerful weapon, the Sudarsana Chakra. The Lord, thereafter, went in search of the crying infants and picked them up in his four hands. They stopped crying and began playing with the dazzling gems, like the Kaustubha and Shrivatsa, in Vishnu's necklace.

As Vishnu emerged from the ocean, the seven sages and Satyavrata were thrilled. They paid their obeisance to him.

The transition from one cycle of ages to another, marked by nature's fury, was now coming to a close. Land was surfacing again. The course of the wind grew tender. Light dispelled the darkness.

Goddess Saraswati, who was already awake, began singing accompanied by her veena. The sweet music terminated Brahma's trance. But he felt uneasy. He knew intuitively that something was missing. Then he wondered: Where were the Vedas which had emanated from him while he lay in a trance? However, he was



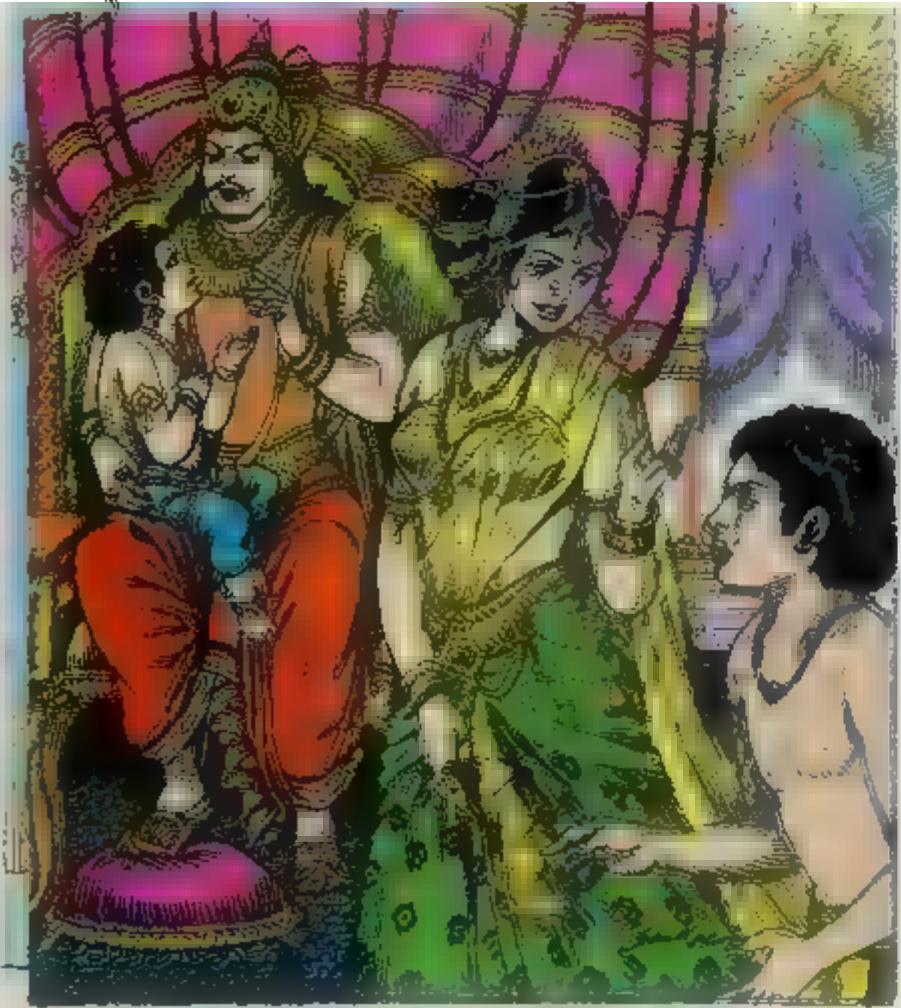
not required to worry about it for long. For, Vishnu appeared before him and handed over the Vedas to him.

"O dispeller of all ignorance and remover of darkness, Vishnu, I bow to thee," said Brahma while accepting his lost property.

Vishnu's role as the Matsya Avatar thus came to an end. He was back in his abode, Vaikuntha.

Brahma gave his attention to the new creation. Satyavrata, as Vaivaswata Manu, became his instrument.

The seven Rishis returned to their positions in the sky and began revolving around Dhruva.



When Sage Suta had narrated the saga thus far, his listeners, the other sages, said: "O noble soul, the star Dhruva seems to be very important. We are eager to hear about him."

Suta narrated the episode of Dhruva in order to satisfy their curiosity.

The position of Dhruva is very high indeed! When we visualise Vishnu as the cosmos, the star Dhruva can be called his crown.

To know the History of Dhruva we have to go to a remote past. The earlier Manu Swayambhuva's son, King Uttanapada, had two queens, Suniti and Suruchi. The elder queen Suniti had a son named Dhruva and the

younger queen Suruchi had a son named Uttam.

It so happened that one day, while King Uttanapada and Queen Suruchi were sitting together, Uttam climbed to his father's lap. Dhruva who saw this, tried to do the same with loving enthusiasm.

But he received a jolt when Queen Suruchi pushed him down from the king's lap.

"Don't you dare sit where *my son* sits!" she shouted angrily and proudly. "You've to be reborn as *my son* if ever such a desire of yours is to be fulfilled," she added.

Dhruva stood before them, dazed. He looked at his father, expecting him to console him. But the king did not utter a word. He did not have the courage to annoy the younger queen.

Queen Suruchi seemed to relish the boy's discomfiture. She laughed and said: "I see you singing the name of Lord Vishnu. Why don't you ask Him for the boon to be born as my son?"

Tears welled in Dhruva's eyes. He fixed his gaze on her and said: "You've given me an excellent advice, Mother! I'm grateful to you. I'll indeed ask Lord Vishnu what I need!" He then went away.

'Dhruva appears to be a fool. How can he pray to Vishnu to be born as my son unless he dies?' wondered Queen Suruchi, looking at her husband, and laughing.

It is probable that the king did not like his younger wife's attitude towards Dhruva, but he said nothing, because he was very much fascinated by her and would not like to displease her.

One of the palace-maids had by then informed Queen Suniti about Dhruva's experience with his step-mother and father. As soon as she saw Dhruva, she burst into tears and said: "My unlucky child! Why did you aspire to as lofty a seat as your father's lap, being born of me? Don't you know that we are hated by Suruchi and being avoided by the king?"

"But, my younger mother gave me an excellent advice — to pray to Lord Vishnu!" said Dhruva between sobs.

"What — to be born of her?" asked queen Suniti.

"Well, mother, I'm going to follow only the first part of her advice and not the second. I shall pray to Lord Vishnu, but not to be born as her son, but to occupy a position far loftier than Chandamama



my father's lap, in fact the loftiest position imaginable. Mother, please do not prevent me from proceeding to the forest, to a spot suitable for my meditation on Vishnu," said Dhruva.

At first Queen Suniti thought that it was only a momentary impulse of Dhruva. But soon Dhruva really set out for the forest. Nothing would stop him.

As he entered the forest, he came face to face with the great Sage Narada.

"Where are you going, O little

prince? Is it for playing hide-and-seek with your friends?" asked the sage.

"I'm going to sit down for *tapasya*", answered Dhruva.

"Is there any play named *tapasya*? Well, I had never heard of it," commented Narada.

"O great sage, I mean a deep meditation on Vishnu," said Dhruva. He then narrated to Narada the events that had prompted him to take such a decision.

"Forget about it, my sweet boy. Come, let me lead you to your father. He will receive you with the love you deserve as a son," proposed Narada.

"O sage, I'm no more in need of any human love. It matters not whether my father repents for his conduct towards me or not. I'm determined to invoke the Grace of Lord Vishnu deep in my heart.

Nothing short of that can satisfy me any longer," was Dhruva's firm response.

Sage Narada smiled and said: "My boy, I was only testing you. Surely, you're right in your decision. Once I, too, had experienced humiliation at human hands which had led me to perform *tapasya*. I shall help you in your endeavour. Select a spot at Madhuvan and sit down and recite *Om Namo Narayana* and meditate on the Lord. My blessings are with you."

Dhruva bowed to the sage and went ahead.

The seekers who were listening to Sage Suta's narration of the story of Dhruva, asked: "Why was Narada humiliated? Who humiliated him? O sage, please satisfy our curiosity."

(To continue)



Vaideeswaran Koil is a small town on the banks of the Kaveri, with one major street running past its age-old Shiva temple. Here, Shiva is worshipped as the lord of healing, the supreme doctor of doctors. It is like any other temple town in Tamil Nadu, except for one feature: it is ■ haven for *Agastya naadi*

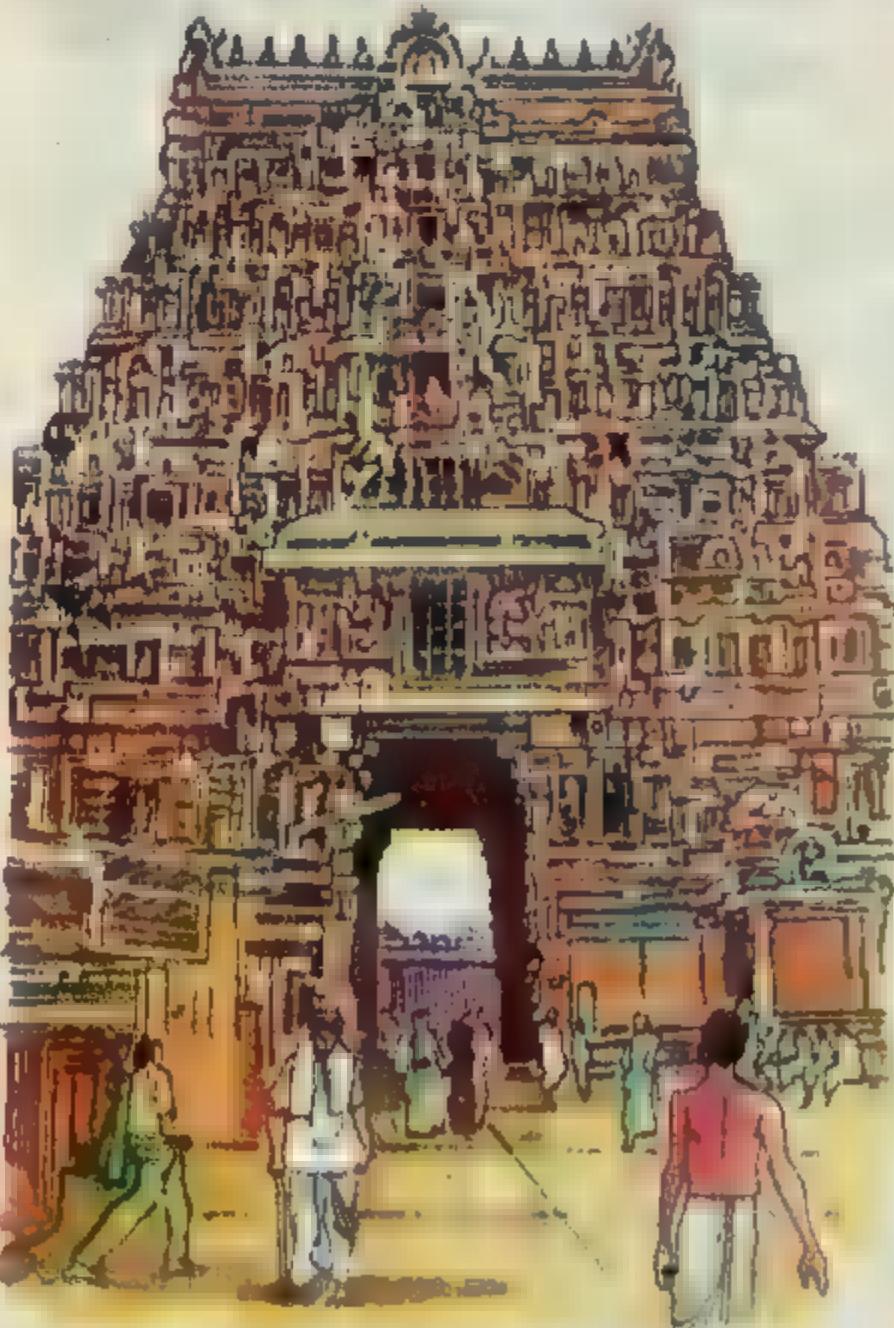
ON THE BANKS OF THE KAVERI - XI JOURNEY'S END

TEXT: JAYANTHI MAHALINGAM ■ ART: GOUTAM SEN

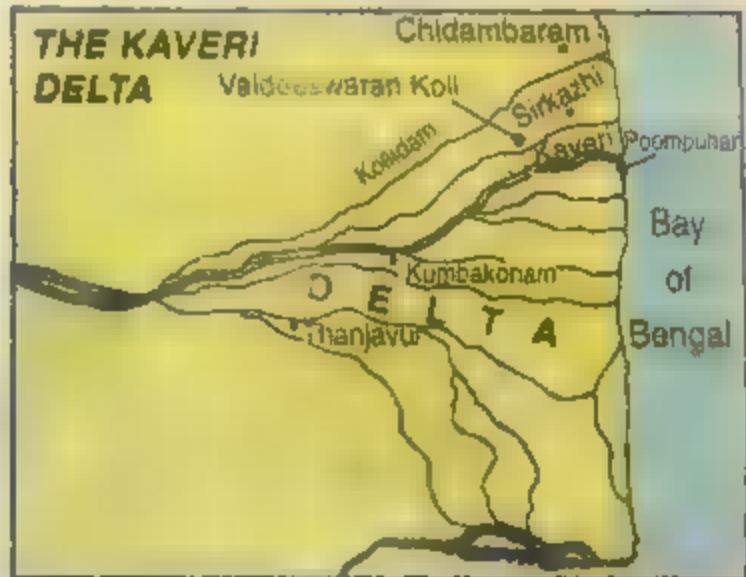
josiers, astrologers who claim to possess ancient palm-leaves inscribed with every individual's past, present and future! These predictions were supposedly recorded by the sage Agastya thousands of years ago. There are scores of such astrologers

*in Vaideeswaran Koil. A typical sitting goes like this: the astrologer takes your thumb impression. Then he goes inside, apparently locates a stack of palm leaves containing information about you and your family, which he peruses closely. After an hour or two of waiting, he tells you what your profession is, your family details and the happenings in your past. Some people say they are tricksters but there are hordes of believers too, who fervently attest to the genuineness of the *naadi* astrologers.*

B e t w e e n Vaideeswaran Koil and Chidambaram is the birthplace of one of the greatest Saivite saints of Tamil Nadu, Tirugnana Sambandar. Sirkhazi is also known for the musicians it has produced. Sambandar was



The Nataraja temple at Chidambaram





Nandanar's one desire was to have darshan of the deity in the Chidambaram temple

foot lifted high in the air. According to mythology it was at this spot that Shiva and Parvati once engaged in a dance competition. Parvati matched every step executed by Shiva and it was clear they were equally matched. Finally Shiva stood on one leg and lifted the other high above his shoulder. Modesty prevented Parvati from imitating this pose and she bowed her head in defeat.

On the philosophical plane, Shiva's dance is a symbol of the unity and rhythm of existence, and the unending process of creation and destruction. The four towering gopurams of the temple have the 108 poses of Bharatanatyam sculpted on either side.

No one knows exactly when the temple was built. The Chola rulers who regarded Nataraja as their guardian deity, covered the roof of the temple with gold. The Pandyas and the Nayakas also made several endowments and additions.

The most enduring legend connected with the Chidambaram temple is that of Nandanar, immortalised not only by Sekkizhar but also by Gopalakrishna Bharati (*Nandan Charitram*). Nandanar was a veritable jewel in the dungheap. He was a *pariah* or low-caste drummer, who was filled with a rapturous devotion to Shiva from childhood. While other children made mud pies, he fashioned *shivalingams* and worshipped them! His one great desire was to visit Thillai or Chidambaram's great Nataraja temple. He spent so many years saying to himself and others that "tomorrow I will go" to Thillai, that people forgot his original name and began

believed to have composed and sung a song of eleven stanzas set to an ancient classical Tamil tune — at the age of three!

Almost at the mouth of the Kaveri's northern branch, the Coleroon or the Kollidam, lies the city of Chidambaram. The renowned Nataraja temple here houses the *Akasalingam*, akasa or ether being one of the five *panchabhutas* or elements. Shiva is also worshipped in the *ananda tandava* pose, with his left

calling him *Naalai-p-povaan* (he who will go tomorrow)! Finally, unable to bear it any longer, he set out for Chidambaram but when he approached the temple, he remembered his low caste, and stood trembling, rooted to a spot in the city's outskirts. For many days, he circled the city, but could not muster enough courage to go to the temple. He went to sleep one night, with the despairing thought that it was his lowly birth which came between him and his beloved Lord. In his dream, Shiva appeared, instructing him to proceed to the temple. He also appeared to the Brahmins living in the temple, asking them to prepare to receive His great devotee. Nandanar went into the Kanakasabha to worship the Lord and there, before the bemused eyes of the Brahmins, Naalaippovaan merged with his beloved.

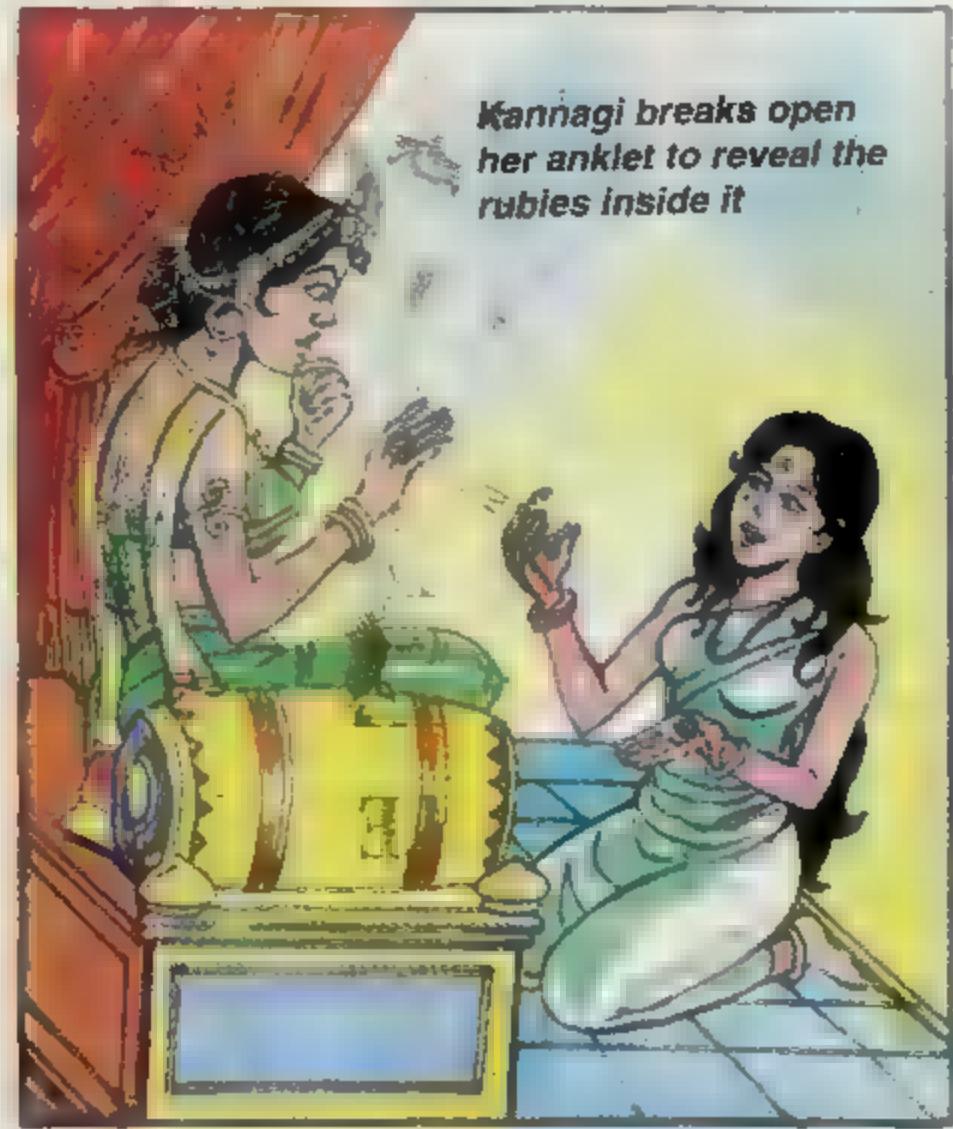
The Kaveri becomes a tiny trickle of water as it flows into the Bay of Bengal at Poompuhar after traversing some 765 kilometres from its source at Kodagu.

The ancient Chola port of Kaveripoompattinam, Poompuhar was the fabled *Chabaris Emporium* described by Greek geographer Ptolemy. A glorious city till the end of the 2nd century A.D., when part of it was swallowed by the sea, Poompuhar carried on trade with Rome and ships plied busily from its harbour. Recent archaeological excavations uncovered two intact portions of a brick wall and another collapsed structure dating to the Sangam age (3rd century B.C.- 2nd century A.D.). Marine explorations by the National Institute of Oceanography, Goa, off the Poompuhar coast, revealed brick structures that might have been part of a dock. Other discoveries in and around Poompuhar include terracotta discs, ringwells, Roman coins, bricks, sandstone slabs and red and black pottery shards. A Buddhist vihara was unearthed in Pallavaneeswaram nearby, which also has a beautiful temple.

The lovely seven-storeyed Sillapathikaram Art Gallery in Poompuhar was built in the 1970's. It has several scenes sculpted in stone from Ilango



Nataraja, the main deity in the Chidambaram temple



Kannagi breaks open her anklet to reveal the rubies inside it

Adigal's moving Tamil epic, *Sillapathikaram* or *The Anklet*. A Chera prince, Ilango wrote the story of Kannagi and Kovalan, a wealthy happily-married couple who lived in Poompuhar. Kovalan falls in love with a dancer-courtesan called Madhavi and squanders all his time and wealth on her. The neglected Kannagi waits and prays for the return of her husband. In time, Kovalan realises his folly and returns home — pauper. They decide to go to Madurai to seek their fortune. Ilango describes the lush landscape through which they journey, most of it along the Kaveri. When they reach Madurai, Kovalan goes to a jeweller to sell one of Kannagi's jewelled

anklets and raise money. The jeweller had previously stolen an identical anklet from the Pandyan queen. He seizes the opportunity and accuses Kovalan of stealing the Queen's anklet. The Pandyan King acts in haste and has Kovalan executed despite his protestations of innocence. When Kannagi hears of this, she storms into court and confronts the Queen. She breaks open the Queen's remaining anklet which contains pearls. Then she shatters her own anklet to reveal that it contained rubies. This devastates the King and Queen who die from the shock. Kannagi tears her left breast out and curses Madurai. The city bursts into flames, while Kannagi wanders away, heart-broken. And just — the Kaveri finds eventual re-union with the sea, Kannagi is swept up to heaven in a chariot, to be reunited with Kovalan forever.



The Kaveri enters the sea at Poompuhar



THE UNTOUCHABLE

On the banks of the sacred Godavari lived an ascetic. He lived in a small hut. The people of the nearby village were happy and proud that a holy man lived in their neighbourhood. They gave him food and met his other meagre needs.

The ascetic was quite conscious of the respect he commanded. He knew that the people would do whatever he wanted them to do. After his bath early in the morning, he sat for prayers on a slab of stone in the river. He would ask the villagers not to disturb him in any way at that time.

The villagers took his direction very seriously. If some of them wished to take a bath early in the morning, they would take their dips as quietly as possible, and away from

the ghat where the holy man sat.

One morning, the ascetic was surprised to see someone dashing into the river, missing to touch him by a hair breadth. Jets of water from the splash the stranger made fell on him. He stood up, trembling with rage and shouted at the bather, "How dare you.... dare you" He could not complete his sentence.

But the boy who was swimming merrily with fierce strokes paid no attention to the holy man's tirade. In fact, he could not hear him because of the sound of the splashes he made.

As soon as the boy emerged from the water, the ascetic went and slapped him, shouting, "You ghoul!" Just then a young man, panting and sweating,

reached there and bowed to him keeping some distance.

"Sir," he said most politely, "this boy is my wife's younger brother. He hails from another village. He is ignorant of your morning rituals. When I did not see him at home, I feared that as he is very fond of swimming in the river, he might come here for a bath and disturb your meditation! I came running, but it seems I was a bit too late!"

"The boy is your brother-in-law, is he?" the ascetic observed. He had by then calmed down, but since the speaker was an untouchable, his brother-in-law also must be an untouchable. The ascetic was, therefore, obliged to take a bath once again, for he had touched an untouchable in the process of slapping him.

The boy, who stood silent, slowly

re-entered the river and came out after a dip.

"What business did you have to bathe again?" his sister's husband asked him impatiently.

"The ascetic had already taken a bath. Why did he bathe again?" asked the boy.

"Do you forget that we are untouchables? He had touched you!" The boy's brother-in-law explained.

"I saw the ghoul in him when he slapped me. Isn't the ghoul an untouchable?" asked the boy. "That's why I had to bathe again."

The holy man stood speechless for a moment. He then approached the boy and said: "Indeed, I had been possessed by the ghoul of anger and ego. If anybody was an untouchable, it was I, and not you."

He then hugged the boy as he touched his feet.



COINCIDENCES: WHAT ARE THEY?

Do clocks have a will of their own? It seems a clock in Sri Aurobindo's room decided to stop at 1.26 a.m. on 5 December 1950 — the time and day Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his physical body.

A great grandfather clock, which youthfully stands in the premises of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, stopped all of a sudden at 7.25 p.m. on 17 November 1973. At that very moment, the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, passed away. Both these clocks have since been left undisturbed.

Pope Paul VI had a precious little alarm clock, which he had bought in 1923. For the past 55 years it had faithfully woken him up at six every morning. But on 6 August 1978, the clock, set for six o'clock, inexplicably began to chime loud and clear at 9.40 p.m. as its master lay dying.

What actually prompted these objects to act in the manner they did? Or was it a mere coincidence?

A young aspiring actor boarded a bus with disappointment writ large on his face. He was to appear before a screening committee and in spite of his best efforts he had failed to find the book from which he was to pre-

UN SOLVED

SERIES

pare his role for the interview. It so happened that in the overcrowded bus a middle-aged stranger, struggling to hold a bundle of books, stood next to him. He requested our would-be actor to help and hold some of the books. But when he got down from the bus, he seemed to have forgotten about his books and just walked away.

The young man out of curiosity pulled out one book from the lot. His face brightened up as he read its title, "*Tughlak*", the book of the drama he was so desperately looking for! The following day, after due preparation, when the young man appeared for his interview, another happy surprise was awaiting him. The middle-aged man happened to be one of the members of the board of examiners. The young actor returned the books to its owner and thanked him.

Every one of us must have met with coincidences one time or the other. But what are they actually? Do

they have a deeper meaning behind them or a hidden message for us?

King Umberto I of Italy was one evening dining with his assistant in a restaurant in Monza. He was to attend an athletics meet the following day. But what amazed him was that the owner of the hotel looked exactly like him. On further enquiry it was found that he was also called Umberto. Like the king he, too, had been born in Turin and on the same day. He had married a girl called Margherita on the day the king married Queen Margherita. Astoundingly, his restaurant was opened on the very day Umberto I was crowned King of Italy.

The king was indeed perplexed. But he did not hesitate to invite the owner of the restaurant to attend the sports meet with him. But alas, the next day the news came that the restaurateur had died in the morning in a mysterious shooting incident. Before the king could swallow the sad tiding, alas, he was shot dead by an anarchist in the crowd. So both the Umbertos died on the same day too! Incredible! It sounds like a fairy tale! Isn't it?

For the past 2,000 years, scientists, philosophers and mathematicians have all felt baffled by this strange phenomenon of coincidence.

Hippocrates, known as the Father of Medicine, who lived in the 4th century BC, the Renaissance philosopher Pico della Mirandola, the 19th century philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, later in the 20th century Dr Paul Kammerer, Nobel Laureate Wolfgang Pauli, Swiss psychologist and philosopher Carl Gustav Jung, and science journalist Arthur Koestler, have all carried out extensive research and put forward unique theories to explain this inexplicable phenomenon. But coincidence has always woven around it an air of mystery. Or is it just a playing of Chance?

Irv Kupcinet, a columnist with the Chicago newspaper recounts the following unusual experience: "I had just checked into the Savoy Hotel in London. Opening a drawer in my room, I found, to my astonishment, that it contained some personal belongings of a friend of mine, Harry Hannin, then with the Harlem Globetrotters basketball team.

"Two days later, I received a letter from Harry, posted in Hotel Meurice, in Paris, which began: 'You'll never believe this'. Apparently, Harry had opened a drawer in his room and found a tie with my name on it. It was a room I had stayed in a few months earlier." Indeed, this bi-

zarre incident looks simple, but it happened just by chance, or was there something more to it?

It was the year 1944 and the world was engulfed in ■ deadly war. The Allies planned to invade Europe and drive away the Nazis and thus bring an end to the Second World War. The entire strategic operation was kept top secret and referred to only by coded words like Overlord, Neptune, Utah, Omah and Mulberry. Amazingly weeks before the D-Day of 6 June, each of these top-secret code words appeared as solutions to clues to the London *Daily Telegraph* crossword. The security men ■ once rounded up the man who had compiled the puzzle taking him to be a spy. But he was found to be an innocent school teacher by profession; and he had been compiling crosswords for the paper for the last 20 years. Then, was it by chance and sheer coincidence that the top-secret military code words had crept into his crossword puzzles at that particular juncture of time?

The master horror and suspense writer, Edgar Allan Poe, recounts an unusual sequence in his book written in 1838, "*The Narrative of Arthur Pym*". After a shipwreck four survivors were in an open boat for several days. Famished and thirsty they killed



the cabin boy and ate him. The name of the cabin boy was Richard Parker.

Years later, in 1884 the fiction turned into reality! A ship called *Mignonette* wrecked and exactly four survivors were left tossing in an open boat in the middle of the sea. Craving for food, the senior three killed and ate the cabin boy. Surprisingly, the name of the cabin boy also happened to be Richard Parker. Amazing! Could it just be chance?

Arthur Koestler aptly describes coincidences as "puns of destiny". Perhaps they are, or could this apparently meaningless chain of random events hold in them meaningful truths? Man is still wondering!



Then and Now

PURI

CITY OF THE LORD OF THE UNIVERSE

Puri, in Orissa, on the eastern sea-coast of India, is one of the cities with a hoary antiquity. The deities of the ancient temple here are Lord Jagannath — the name means Lord of the Universe — and his elder brother Balaram, and younger sister Subhadra. Although the present temple was built in the 12th

July 2000

century by King Chodaganga Dev, the deities dwelt in an older temple or probably in several older temples.

It is believed that the wooden idol of Lord Jagannath contains some mysterious object which is transferred into a new image from time to time. Some people believe that the object is nothing but the Relics of Lord Krishna. The casket containing the Relics was being worshipped by Visvavasu, a tribal chief. Visvavasu could be a descendant of Jara Sabara, the hunter who had unwittingly killed Lord Krishna. A legendary king, Indradyumna, had a feeling that the Lord's presence lay hidden somewhere in the forests not far from the

city of Puri. He sent four intelligent men in search of it in four different directions.

One of them, Vidyapati, went eastward and became Visvavasu's guest. The tribal chief's daughter Lalita and he fell in love with each other and were married. While staying there, Vidyapati found out how his father-in-law worshipped the mysterious object preserved in a cave. He insisted on seeing it. He was taken there blind-fold but he had been clever enough to carry a handful of mustard seeds which he went on scattering as he was led to the cave.

Once inside the cave he intuitively knew that he was in the presence of the Divine Relics. A few days later, after the seeds had sprouted, he found his way into the secret cave and decamped with the Relics. King Indradyumna was delighted. He proceeded to the forest himself and apologized to Visvavasu and convinced him that it was time the Divine object was revealed to all the people.

It is interesting to note that the descendants of Vidyapati and Lalita are among the priests of Lord Jagannath. Vidyapati was a Brahmin. This

shows that there was no caste-taboos in those days.

Lord Jagannath's car festival or the Ratha Yatra falls this month. The event commemorates Krishna's journey from Gopa to Mathura. Tens of thousands of people would gather at Puri on the occasion. (See picture below.)

While at Puri one feels that the gap between a remote past and the present is narrowed down. The food one can get from the temple as *Prasad* is the kind of food the people ate at least a thousand years ago, if not more!

Puri has several other temples of antiquity. But it is also a town with modern amenities. The promenade along its beach is a lovely sight. Every day thousands of pilgrims and tourists bathe in the sea or enjoy strolls on the silver sands.

The modern Puri has ■ big institution for Sanskrit studies and another for the study of Ayurveda.





CHANDAMAMA

ENRICH YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Answers to the quiz published in this issue will appear in the next issue. Meanwhile, try to find the answers yourself and enrich your knowledge of India's antiquity and heritage.

1



1. (a) Which two great prophets were contemporaries? Both of them had hailed from royal families.
- (b) What is the language in which the early Buddhist works were written?
- (c) What is the name of the earliest Buddhist work?
- (d) What is the language in which the early Jain works were written?
- (e) What are the names of the earliest Jain works?

2

A legendary king was out hunting. From the forest he sent his upper garment, which had been splattered with the blood of a beast he had killed, to his queen. He instructed the bearer to say nothing to the queen, but only to place the garment in front of her. He desired to see the queen's reaction, for he was sure the queen would think the blood on the garment was his. The fun proved to be extremely costly, for, when the king returned to the palace, the queen, out of shock, was dead!

Who was the king?

Who was the queen?



MUST WE DO IN ROME AS ROMANS DO?

Those of us who have read Shakespeare's *Tempest* would remember the scene when Prince Ferdinand sees Miranda for the first time. He presumes that she is the goddess of the island or its ruler. Hence he requests her to instruct him as to how he should bear himself in that strange place — or in what manner he should conduct himself.

"Do in Rome as Romans do" — is a well-known proverb. That is to say, we are expected to follow the etiquettes and customs of the land which we visit. But in our age, which is an age of internationalism, such expectations are no longer very strong. Like Indian food becoming available in plenty in the West and the Western food in India, to some extent manners also have crossed the national boundaries. Except for some formal functions and formal occasions and some orthodox clubs where formal manners and dress regulations continue to be followed, one need not be too conscious of a formality in manners in our times.

This does not mean that one should be a boor. One cannot gate-crash into a party where people have assembled by invitations only; one must not butt into the conversation of two persons unless asked; or one (if a man) should not extend one's hand first when introduced to a lady, for it is her prerogative to shake hands with you or not.

Good manners would automatically



come from a person who has two attributes: culture and humility. Once a wise man was asked: "When do we know that one had good manners?" Answered the wise man: "When you see the man carrying on gracefully with people of bad manners." That is possible when one has true culture within oneself. Next, if one has humility, one is not likely to be a man of bad manners. Very often we come across people who go on talking. They do not care to think whether their listeners are interested in their talk or not. The worse is the case with those who go on talking about themselves. Surely, there are people who have enough in their lives to talk about. But first they must be sure that their listeners want to know about them. They talk because they are in love with themselves, with their own voices.

Humility makes one to remember that there are many who are superior to him in experience and wisdom. Even otherwise he can learn something from any ordinary person if he had a pair of alert ears. Such a man never brags about himself — and that is a sign of essential good manners.

SRI LANKA

According to the *Mahavamsa*, the ancient chronicle of Sri Lanka, Vijay Singha, a prince from eastern India, reached that island in a remote past. He occupied the island, pushing into forests the small tribe of people already living there. He had with him five hundred lieutenants. He arranged for their marriage with girls from Madurai. The Sinhalese of today are their descendants. The island was called Simhala

were in the minority, complained of injustice done to them by the majority. They agitated through an organisation known as Tamil United Liberation Front, TULF in brief. By and by, several other Tamil organisations were formed. Among them, the most violent one is the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam or LTTE. It wants an independent state, carved out of Sri Lanka.



(Ceylon) after Vijay Singha. Prince Mahendra and Princess Sanghamitra, the son and daughter of Emperor Ashoka, converted the ruling family and their subjects into Buddhists.

Soon princes and merchants from the southern region of India, the Tamil kingdoms in particular, reached the island and inhabited it. They were concentrated mostly in the area closer to India, known as Jaffna.

Both the Sinhalese and the Tamils of Sri Lanka are of Indian origin. However, for a long time, the Tamils, who



IN TURMOIL

With the emergence of the LTTE, the Tamil agitation took a different turn. The LTTE claimed itself to be the sole voice of the Tamils. Any other leader, who



had a slightly different opinion, was killed. The LTTE thus liquidated some of

the most seasoned and sincere Tamil leaders and ultimately Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, too.

A continuous war is being fought between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan army. The common people of Jaffna have suffered a lot. The nation's economy, too, has received a great blow. Thousands of Tamils have come over to India as refugees. This conflict has lately become acute.

India had always been sympathetic to the cause of the Sri Lankan Tamils. But it does not wish to see the country divided. From its own experience, India has realised that division does not solve a problem. The division of India had helped neither India nor Pakistan. Rather, both countries continue to be unhappy.

Secondly, no country believing in democracy can approve of the ways of the LTTE. Assassination of other leaders, including some of the highly respected Tamils, can hardly be called a civilized action. Terrorism is condemned by all.

Much can be done through negotiations and understanding. India, as well as the world, expects a climate of mutual goodwill to triumph over violence.



LET US KNOW

* *How does a submarine function?*

- *Prabhakaran Thampan, Quilon*

Remember the story of Archimedes (3rd century)? When he entered a tub full of water, some of the water overflowed to give room for him in the tub. By decreasing the displacement of a floating body, it can be set to float. Similarly, by increasing the weight, it can be made to submerge. Incidentally, the first submarine was built and tested in 1605 by a Dutch inventor named Cornelis Drebbel.

* *Why is it called "Modern English"?*

- *Lathika Suri, Monghyr*

English belongs to the Celtic or the Indo-Germanic (Aryan) family of languages. The Celts began invading the British Isles nearly 2,500 years ago. The Saxons (who lived in North Germany) invaded Britain in the 5th century. By the 9th century Saxon became the language of common use. The English language developed slowly through other influences (like the Norman conquest). By the 16th century, Modern English developed.

* *When was slavery abolished?*

- *Mohammed Ansari, Ahmedabad*

The slave trade was first abolished in the British empire by an Act of Parliament in 1833. Some 30 years later, it was abolished in the U.S.A. Slavery has no legal sanction anywhere in the world, but the practice of maintaining slaves still prevails in some countries.

* *What does D.C. in "Washington, D.C." stand for?*

- *Rajinder Kaur, Chandigarh*

D.C. is the abbreviation for the District of Columbia, which is the seat of the Federal Government of the U.S.A.

Towards Better English

AH! A TUMMY PROBLEM!



WILL BUTTER FLY IN THE STOMACH?

"I heard my friend's father remark: 'Mohan gets butterflies in his stomach before he appears for every examination.' What does that expression mean?" This query has come from our reader Jayanthi Nagaraj of Dharmapuri.

To have butterflies in one's stomach simply means, one gets nervous before one does something important. This is a feeling which cannot be described in words! Maybe, one feels there are butterflies in one's stomach flapping their wings!

Reader Ramesh Tripathi of Bhubaneshwar wants to know the full meaning of "lock, stock, and barrel".

The expression takes its origin from armoury. Every gun has three main parts — the locking system, the stock which holds the bullets, and the barrel through which the bullets pass — all of which make a gun complete in itself. The idiomatic expression means something complete. If you hear a factory owner say that he has moved his unit lock, stock, and barrel to another place, it only means that he has not left out anything — except probably the shed!

Which plural form is correct — genii or geniuses? asks Visalakshi Menon of Tripoonithura.

The word "genius" is of Latin origin. In that language, the common plural form is genii. In English, however, 'geniuses' is generally accepted. Other examples are fungus - fungi - funguses, and focus - foci - focuses.

Could you mention some examples of "Indian" English? asks Mithra Das of Cannanore.

"Please take your seat" instead of "Please sit down"; "He is not in his seat" (he is not here/ not in the office); "What is your good name?" (What is your name?"); "to take coffee" (to drink coffee); "Whatsoever" (Whatever).

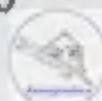


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